



IT HAPPENED TO ME...
DENNIS HOPPER'S
ALIEN ENCOUNTER

NAZI IDOL FROM OUTER SPACE HEINRICH HIMMLER'S METEORIC FIND
HORROR WRITER SPOOKED JAMES HERBERT'S GHOSTLY ENCOUNTER
MUSICAL TEETH THIEF GRAVE-ROBBER TARGETS COMPOSERS' GNASHERS

THE WORLD'S **WEIRDEST** NEWS STORIES

PINK PIGEON • ACROBATIC GOAT • PESKY PENGUINS • BAD CATFISH • RUSSIA'S ELITE FOXES

THE WORLD OF

STRANGE PHENOMENA

WWW.FORTEANTIMES.COM

ForteanTimes

FT295 DECEMBER 2012 £4.25

STEAMPUNK

VICTORIAN VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

FORTEAN TIMES 295
STEAMPUNK • HEXHAM HEADS PART 2 • PAUL SCREETON INTERVIEW • INDONESIAN STONE RAINS • RUSSIA'S ELITE FOXES • JAMES HERBERT SPOOKED • NAZI SPACE IDOL
DECEMBER 2012



CAN AN UNARMED MAN
DRESSED AS A REAL-LIFE
SUPERHERO SUCCESSFULLY
BREAK UP A GANG OF ARMED
CRACK DEALERS IN SEATTLE AT
3AM? WHY DOES ROBBIE WILLIAMS
EMPATHISE SO MUCH WITH ALIEN
ABDUCTEES THAT HE JOURNEYS
TO MEET THEM IN THE NEVADA
DESERT? HOW CAN 171 PEOPLE
VANISH FROM CRUISE SHIPS AND
THERE BE NO INVESTIGATION?
WHY DID A BBC TV PRESENTER
OWN UP TO A KILLING HE DIDN'T
COMMIT? WHY DID STANLEY KUBRICK
HAVE HIS NEPHEW PHOTOGRAPH
PRACTICALLY EVERY DOORWAY IN
LONDON? IS THERE REALLY A ROBOT
OUT THERE THAT'S ABOUT TO BURST
INTO SPONTANEOUS LIFE? WHY DID
NOEL EDMONDS SPY ON HIS DEAL
OR NO DEAL CONTESTANTS WHEN
THEY WERE BACK AT THE HOTEL?
WHY DID A BUNCH OF ELF KIDS LIVING
IN A CHRISTMAS THEME TOWN
IN ALASKA PLOT A SCHOOL
SHOOTING? MEET THE INSANE
CLOWN POSSE, AMERICA'S
MOST HARDCORE RAPPERS,
WHO REVEAL THEY'VE
BEEN EVANGELICAL
CHRISTIANS
ALL ALONG.

JOIN JON RONSON
IN AN EXPLORATION
OF HUMAN WEIRDNESS



WHY NOT
JOURNEY INTO
THE MADNESS
INDUSTRY WITH
JON RONSON?

JonRonson



PICADOR



Buy it at your local Waterstones
or Waterstones.com

WorldMags.net



ForteanTimes



Available on the iPhone

App Store

CONTENTS

the world of strange phenomena



32 BACK TO THE FUTURE

How Steampunk's Victorian visions have been shaping our retro-future



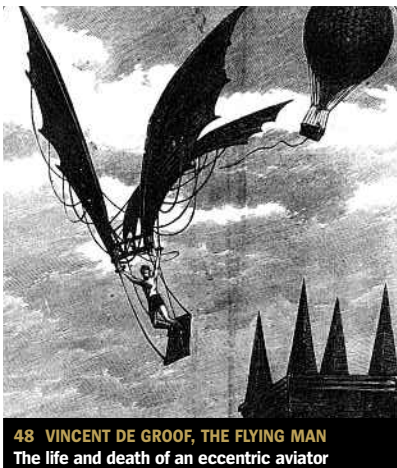
44 IN SEARCH OF THE HEXHAM HEADS

More heads... and more mysteries



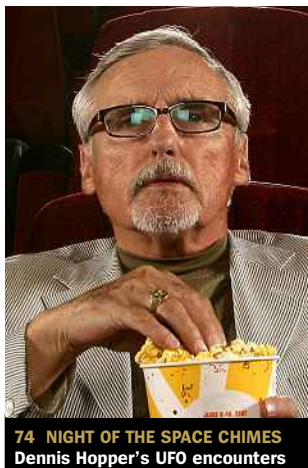
40 WEIRD WEATHER

Surprise hurricanes and glowing snow



48 VINCENT DE GROOF, THE FLYING MAN

The life and death of an eccentric aviator



74 NIGHT OF THE SPACE CHIMES

Dennis Hopper's UFO encounters

Fortean Times 295

strange days

Nazi idol from outer space; Catkin the goat acrobat; Yoda the deep sea worm; amazing animal escapes; Vienna's musical tooth thief; Ig Nobel Awards 2012; mother of all pearls; rock art gets older; Belyaev's elite foxes; giant eyeball washes up on Florida beach – and much more.

15 2012 WATCH

16 SCIENCE

18 GHOSTWATCH

21 ALIEN ZOO

22 ARCHÆOLOGY

22 CLASSICAL CORNER

24 MEDICAL BAG

25 KONSPIRACY KORNER

26 NECROLOG

27 STRANGE DEATHS

28 THE UFO FILES

features

COVER STORY

32 BACK TO THE FUTURE

In the past two decades, Steampunk has become a pervasive influence on contemporary culture, making its mark on art, design, fashion, film and music. **BRIAN J ROBB** looks back at the genre's history and speculates on its future.

44 IN SEARCH OF THE HEXHAM HEADS, PART TWO

In 1977, Paul Screeton went to the Northumberland town of Hexham to investigate a bizarre case involving stone heads, Celtic scholarship, poltergeist phenomena and werewolves. 40 years on, **STUART FERROL** joined Paul as he retraced his steps. Would the mystery now be solved?

50 HEADCASE: A CHAT WITH PAUL SCREETON

Paul Screeton has been writing about forteana for over 40 years. **STUART FERROL** met him in a Northumbrian pub for a look back at his long and varied career.

reports

34 BLASTS FROM THE PAST

No. 42. The Stone Rains of Indonesia by Theo Paijmans

40 DICTIONARY OF THE DAMNED

No. 48. Weird Weather

74 STORIES FROM THE ILLUSTRATED POLICE NEWS

No. 17. The flying man by Dr Jan Bondeson

forum

53 The Mane attraction by Neil Arnold

56 Islands of the ABCs by Merrily Harpur

regulars

02 EDITORIAL

52 SUBSCRIPTIONS

71 LETTERS

78 READER INFO

79 PHENOMENOMIX

80 TALES FROM THE VAULT

EDITOR

DAVID SUTTON
(drsutton@forteanimes.com)

FOUNDING EDITORS

BOB RICKARD (rickard@forteanimes.com)
PAUL SIEVEKING (sieveking@forteanimes.com)

ART DIRECTOR

ETIENNE GILFILLAN
(etienne@forteanimes.com)

BOOK REVIEWS EDITOR

VAL STEVENSON
(val@forteanimes.com)

RESIDENT CARTOONIST

HUNT EMERSON

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES AND BACK ISSUES

www.subsinfo.co.uk
ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk

FORTLEAN TIMES is produced for Dennis Publishing by Wild Talents Ltd. Postal address: Fortean Times, PO BOX 71602, London E17 0QD.

You can manage your existing subscription through <http://www.subsinfo.co.uk/> – this should be your first port of call if you have any queries about your subscription.

Change your address, renew your subscription or report problems

UK subscriptions: 0844 844 0049

USA & Canada subscriptions: (+1) 888-428-6676

Fax (+1) 757-428-6253 email cs@imsnews.com

Other overseas subscriptions: +44 (0)1795 592 909

Fax: +44 (0)1795 414 555

LICENSING & SYNDICATION

FORTLEAN TIMES IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERNATIONAL LICENSING AND SYNDICATION – CONTACT:

Syndication Senior Manager

ANJ DOSAJ-HALAI TEL: +44 (0) 20 7907 6132

Anj_Dosaj-Halai@dennis.co.uk

Licensing Manager

CARLOTTA SERANTONI TEL: +44 (0) 20 7907 6550

CarloTTa_Serantoni@dennis.co.uk

Licensing & Syndication Assistant

NICOLE ADAMS TEL: +44 (0) 20 7907 6134

Nicole_Adams@dennis.co.uk

YOU CAN REACH FT ON THE INTERNET

www.forteanimes.com



PUBLISHED BY

DENNIS PUBLISHING,
30 Cleveland Street
London W1T 4JD, UK Tel: 020 7907 6000

GROUP PUBLISHER

PAUL RAYNER: 020 7907 6663

paul_rayner@dennis.co.uk

CIRCULATION MANAGER

james.mangan@seymour.co.uk

EXPORT CIRCULATION MANAGER

garth.viggers@seymour.co.uk

SENIOR PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE

EBONY BESAGNI: 020 7907 6060

ebony_besagni@dennis.co.uk

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

SOPHIE VALENTINE: 020 7907 6057

sophie_valentine@dennis.co.uk

DEPUTY ADVERTISING MANAGER

CIARAN SCARRY

020 7907 6683

ciarán_scarr@dennis.co.uk

CLASSIFIED SALES EXECUTIVE

RYAN GIBBORNE WEAR

020 7907 6763

ryan_gw@dennis.co.uk

PRINTED BY BENHAM GOODHEAD PRINT LTD

DISTRIBUTION

Distributed in UK, Ireland and worldwide

by Seymour Distribution Ltd.

2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT

Tel: 020 7429 4000 / Fax: 020 7429 4001

Queries on overseas availability should be emailed to info@seymour.co.uk

Speciality store distribution by Worldwide Magazine

Distribution Ltd, Tel: 0121 788 3112 Fax: 0121 7881272

STANDARD SUBSCRIPTION RATES

12 issues: UK £39.98; EU £47.50;

REST OF THE WORLD £55; US \$79.99 (\$143.98 for 24 issues)

Fortean Times (USPS 023-226) is published every four weeks by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 4JD, United Kingdom. The US annual subscription price is \$79.99.

Airfreight and mailing in the USA is by Agent named Air Business,

C/O Worldnet Shipping USA Inc., 149-35 177th Street, Jamaica,

New York, 11434.

Periodical postage paid at Jamaica, NY 11431, USA.

US Postmaster: Send address changes to: Fortean Times,

3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 404, Virginia Beach, VA, 23451-2983, USA.

DENNIS PUBLISHING LIMITED

GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR

FINANCE DIRECTOR

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CHAIRMAN

IAN LEGGETT

BRETT REYNOLDS

KERIN O'CONNOR

JAMES T'YNN

FELIX DENNIS

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Circulation 17,024 (Jan-Dec 2011)

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899

© Fortean Times: NOVEMBER 2012

editorial

When folk devils turn real

Clunk, click...

As we go to press, the main topic of discussion in Britain continues to be the shocking revelations about the predatory sexual activities of a weird-looking radio and television personality called Jimmy Savile, who appears to have terrorised and abused the nation's youngsters for 40 years, all the while remaining untouched by scandal. Like any case of this kind, it has its fortlean aspects. There are the accusations of institutional cover-up – and even of an organised paedophile ring – at the BBC, accusations fanned by modern-day prophet and cosmic conspiracy theorist David Icke, who claims he revealed all this long before the current scandal exploded.

Police, we're told, are now following 400 separate lines of enquiry, with fresh accusers coming forward and new names being named every day. Until the testimony and evidence is examined, comment is futile, but memories of the Satanic Abuse panic of the 1980s and 90s, with its paranoid fantasies of an institutional conspiracy and numerous instances of false memory, suggest that getting to the truth will be no easy matter.

Another aspect is summed up by poet Benjamin Zephaniah's reaction to the Savile revelations on the BBC discussion programme *Question Time*: "I jumped off the chair and said, 'I knew it!'"

In fact, everybody "knew it", although just how remains a mystery. A quick poll at Fortean Towers revealed that stories of Savile's paedophilia (and worse) were common currency as far back as the 1970s and 80s, with various 'urban legends' spreading across the country without the aid of the Internet or Twitter, and with interesting regional variations. For example, there was the notion that Savile's involvement with Stoke Mandeville Hospital allowed him to indulge a predilection for necrophilia – a particularly gruesome 'fact' familiar to some people, entirely unknown to others. On 15 October, the *Sun* reported that the hospital was now investigating Savile's "unaccompanied mortuary visits", suggesting that ostention – whereby folklore becomes fact – is at work here.

All of this suggests that there was a major disjunction between 'official' and 'folk' discourses concerning Savile. It may be that the BBC failed to keep the lid on the affair and that there were leaks from people in the entertainment industry, incapable as they all appear to have been of speaking out openly. Or, were these tales, shared in school common rooms and college bars, indeed a form of despised folk knowledge that bypassed the establishment to intuit a hidden truth?

Certainly, Savile's rapid demotion from TV saint to national bogeyman is nowhere more evident than in the recent removal of his grave-stone; one only wonders why they didn't dig up the corpse for decapitation and staking, just in case...

Errata

Firstly, we'd like to apologise to Stuart Ferrol, author of our two-part Hexham Heads feature (FT294:42-47 and this issue, pp44-49) for referring to him elsewhere in the issue (on the contents and editorial pages) as Stu Neville, who is one of the long-serving moderators on the *Fortetan Times* online forum. Despite our eternal

gratitude for his good work there, the cheque he was looking forward to for writing Stuart F's feature is *not* in the post.

Another Hexham Heads-related error crept in (is it some sort of curse?) on p44. The caption to the photograph at the top of the page states that it shows "Graham Williamson, Stu Ferrol, Paul Screeton and Oliver Lewis". In fact, Olly Lewis was not present, and the Fourth Man is actually Nigel Craigie, son of head-making Hexham prankster Des Craigie.

And a further mix-up of identities happened on p54, where John Fraser's biography informed us that he is

"a former BBC religious affairs correspondent". This was news to John, who wondered just who he had morphed into. The answer, of course, was *FT* regular Ted Harrison. John's real biography is as follows: John Fraser is a Council member of the Society For Psychical Research and serves on their Spontaneous Cases Committee. He has previously been Vice Chair (Investigations) of The Ghost Club and has actively investigated the paranormal for over 20 years. He is the author of *Ghost Hunting: A Survivor's Guide* (History Press, 2010) and can be contacted at jfraserghosthunting@hotmail.co.uk.

DAVID SUTTON
BOB RICKARD
PAUL SIEVEKING



Why fortlean?
Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!
SEE PAGE 78

CHRISTMAS EVIL

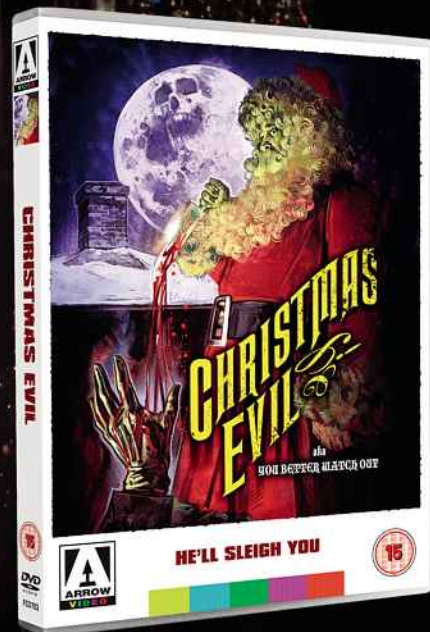
THE CLASSIC YULETIDE SLASHER
LOADED WITH SPECIAL FEATURES!

"THE BEST SEASONAL FILM OF ALL TIME"

JOHN WATERS (PINK FLAMINGOS, HAIRSPRAY)

**"GETS BETTER WITH EACH VIEWING...
WONDERFULLY NASTY HYBRID
OF ART AND EXPLOITATION"**

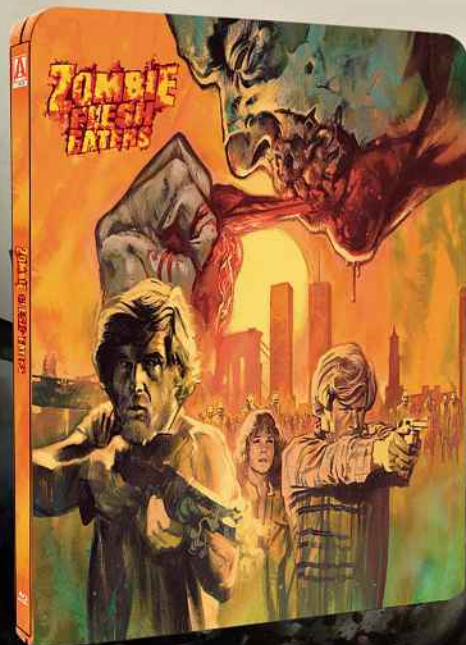
FILMTHEAT



AVAILABLE ON DVD 12TH NOVEMBER

STRONG UNCUT VERSION!

THE LEGENDARY VIDEO NASTY RESTORED FROM THE ORIGINAL
NEGATIVE, LOADED WITH HOURS OF EXTRAS!



ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS



EAT MY BRAINS

**"ONE OF THE GREAT ZOMBIE
FILMS OF ALL TIME"**

TWITCH

"JAW-DROPPING SET PIECES"

SLANT

**AVAILABLE 26TH NOVEMBER
IN LIMITED EDITION STEELBOOK, BLU-RAY AND DVD**

For the latest information on forthcoming releases visit:

f / ArrowVideo t / @ArrowFilmsVideo

www.arrowfilms.co.uk

amazon.co.uk

Free Super Saver Delivery and Unlimited Free One-Day Delivery with Amazon Prime are available.
Terms and Conditions apply. See Amazon.co.uk for details.

WorldMags.net

strangedays

Himmler's meteoric find

A mysterious statue taken from Tibet by the Nazis turns out to be carved from a type of space rock

A Nazi expedition to Tibet in 1938/39, personally sponsored by Heinrich Himmler to research Aryan origins and led by renowned zoologist SS Hauptsturmführer Ernst Schäfer, came upon a curious ancient statue or idol. The large swastika carved into the centre of the figure may have encouraged the team to take it back to Germany. Once it arrived in Munich it became part of a private collection and only became available for study following an auction in 2009.

The statue, known as the Iron Man, has now been analysed by a German-Austrian research team led by Dr Elmar Buchner from the Institute of Planetology, University of Stuttgart, whose report was published in *Meteoritics and Planetary Science*. This revealed that it was carved from an ataxite, a very rare class of iron meteorite. "It is rich in nickel, it is rich in cobalt," said Dr Buchner. "Less than 0.1 per cent of all meteorites and less than 1 per cent of iron meteorites are ataxites, so it the rarest type of meteorite you can find."

The statue is 9.5in (24cm) high, weighs 22lb (10kg), and is tentatively dated to the 11th century AD. It is believed to represent a stylistic hybrid between the Buddhist and pre-Buddhist Bon culture that portrays Vaisravana (or Vessavana), also known in Tibet as Jambhala or Namtösé. In Tibet, the god is considered a worldly dharmapala, or protector of the Dharma (natural law). He is also known as the King of the North and is regarded as a god of wealth. In some representations he is accompanied by a mongoose, often shown ejecting jewels from its mouth. The mon-



goose is the enemy of the snake, a symbol of greed or hatred; the ejection of jewels represents generosity.

The swastika is an ancient solar symbol, found from Paraguay to Alaska, Cyprus to China. Until the 20th century, it was known in England as the fylfot cross or gammadion, in heraldry as the croix gammée

or croix cramponnée, and in its rounded form as the tetraskelē. Fylfot comes from the Anglo-Saxon *four-fot* (the four- and many-footed cross), the foot allusion being explicit in the three-footed emblem of the Isle of Man. The word swastika is derived from the Sanscrit *svasti* ('good fortune' or 'all is well'). In India it dates back at least five millennia, having been found in the 1920s adorning artefacts from the Indus valley civilisation. It can point clockwise – or anti-clockwise, as on this idol. To Hindus and Buddhists it is primarily a tantric symbol evoking *shakti* (primordial cosmic energy). The clockwise version was notoriously traduced as a racist symbol by the National Socialist German Workers' Party in 1920.

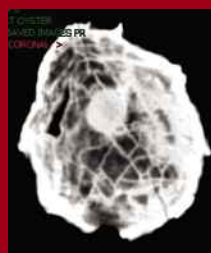
Dr Buchner said that the geochemical analysis showed that "the statue was chiselled from a fragment of the Chinga meteorite which crashed into the border areas between Mongolia and Siberia about 15,000 years ago. While the first debris was officially discovered in 1913 by gold prospectors, we believe that this individual meteorite fragment [the third largest identified] was collected many centuries before. The Iron Man statue is the only known example of a human figure carved into a meteorite. It is extremely impressive. It was formerly almost completely gilded. It represents a great mystery." *Nature*, *ScienceDaily*, 26 Sept; *BBC News*, 27 Sept 2012. For the Nazi expedition to Tibet, see "Himmler's Crusade" by Christopher Hale, FT175:30-39. For the role of meteorites in various religious traditions, see "Bætylmania!" by David Hambling, FT292:46-50.

DR ELMAR BUCHNER

The Iron Man is carved from a rare class of meteorite



**VIENNA'S
TEETH THIEF**
Who is stealing
the gnashers
of the great
composers?
PAGE 8



**MOTHER OF
ALL PEARLS**
145 million-
year-old oyster
with a golf ball-
sized pearl
PAGE 15



**GHOST
WRITERS**
James Herbert
and the spook
in EF Benson's
garden
PAGE 18



Florida's giant eyeball

Early morning stroller discovers outsized mystery orb

On his usual morning stroll along Pompano Beach on the southeast tip of Florida on 10 October, Gino Covacci noticed a strange spherical object at the high tide line. He kicked it over and found himself staring at the biggest eyeball he had ever seen. He put the blue, softball-sized orb in a plastic bag in his fridge. "It was very, very fresh," he told the *Orlando Sentinel*. "It was still bleeding when I put it in the plastic bag." Wildlife officers preserved the eyeball in formalin before sending it to the Florida Wildlife Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute in St Petersburg.

There was widespread speculation about the identity of the eye's owner. Swordfish and squid were suggested, since both need large eyes to see in deep, dark waters. Playful sugges-

tions on the Institute's Facebook page included HP Lovecraft's Cthulhu, comic genius Marty Feldman, and Sauron, scourge of Middle Earth.

Five days after the discovery, Joan Herrera, curator of collections at the Institute, announced: "Experts on site and remotely have viewed and analysed the eye, and based on its colour, size and structure, along with the presence of bone around it, we believe the eye came from a swordfish. Based on straight-line cuts visible around the eye, we believe it was removed by a fisherman and discarded." Experts were due to conduct genetic testing to verify their findings. It wasn't immediately clear how large a swordfish the eye might have come from, but the species can grow as large as 1,400lb (635kg). [AP] *South Florida Sun-Sentinel, The Register*, 12 Oct 2012.

FLORIDA WILDLIFE COMMISSION

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES
FROM AROUND THE WORLD

BUS ON FIRE – PASSENGERS ALIGHT

West Wales Guardian [no date]

Man took woman home in suitcase

Irish Independent, 9 June 2012.

WATER COMPANIES BLAME DROUGHT ON WEATHER

Times, 24 Feb 2012.

Zombies at town hall

Hull Daily Mail, 14 Sept 2012.

Archangel mixes best bloody Mary

Somerset Standard, 7 June 2012.

Couple to float next to Queen

Enfield Independent, 6 June 2012.

We'll get back on track, vows train operator

Hull Daily Mail, 19 June 2012.

Garbage truck lands on Saturn

CBC News (California), 28 May 2012.

Island travels ahead in time

<i> 31 Dec 2011.

Bargains at baby sale

Hull Daily Mail, 6 Mar 2012.

Vikings seize drugs and explosives

Salisbury Journal (Wiltshire), 7 June 2012.

YOUTH HIT BY TRAIN RUSHED TO TWO HOSPITALS

Harrow Observer [no date]

CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

Some of the unusual holdings of the Grant Museum of Zoology, London, on display in September, including a jar of preserved moles (right) and a young preserved aardvark displayed under the skeleton of an adult (facing page). Started as a teaching collection in 1828, the Museum contains some 67,000 specimens but normally displays only about five per cent of them.

PHOTOS:
PETER MACDIARMID/
GETTY IMAGES





SIDELINES...

LOST IN A TRANCE

Teenage girls at the Collège du Sacré-Coeur, a private school in Sherbrooke, Quebec, were stuck in a trance for several hours by novice hypnotist Maxime Nadeau, 20, at an end-of-school year event. Some of the girls, aged 12 and 13, were left with their heads lying on tables or with their eyes open "but nobody home". Nadeau called his mentor, Richard Whitbread, who made the hour-long drive from Danville and snapped them out of it. *CBC News*, 15 June 2012.

BAFFLING BIRTH

A calf has puzzled farmers and vets by being born bright violet. Milka is a "freak genetic throw-back", according to owner Radmila Glavonjic, from Cacak, central Serbia. *Metro*, 18 Jan 2012.

BELLCLOSE BANANA

A 37-year-old Polish man was treated by paramedics after being punched and kicked late at night outside a bank in Newton Abbot, Devon, by a man dressed as a banana. The fruity assailant was white, fair-haired and aged about 25. *Sun*, 18 Aug 2012.

MUTANT RATS

Rats the size of cats are terrorising the inhabitants of Port Elizabeth, in South Africa, attacking children and gorging themselves on food supplies. One victim said they were so big that poison had no effect. "They have taken over," she said. "You hit them with a broom and they just look you in the eye." *D.Mirror*, 14 June 2012.



MARTIN ROSS

Musical tooth removal

Viennese tomb-raider wanted his own museum of dentistry



TOP AND ABOVE: Two of the many faces of 'OJ', alias Ondrej Jajcay. ABOVE RIGHT: Beethoven's grave in the Viennese Central Cemetery.

In a video posted on YouTube, Slovakian Ondrej Jajcay boasts of breaking into the tombs of composers Johannes Brahms (d.1897) and Johann Strauss Jr (d.1899) to take their teeth. He claims the stolen choppers will become part of an exhibition of objects plundered from graves. On a website, Jajcay – initially identified in the Austrian media merely by his initials, OJ – describes himself as a 'Freedom Undertaker' and takes viewers on a tour of 'graves of honour' in the Viennese Central Cemetery, pointing out fresh earth around the tombs. In one video he gives a tour of his collection, announcing: "Now, we come to the major pedestal. On the top are the teeth of Johann Strauss Jr. To the left there are dentures of his wife Adele Strauss. To the right, we have the rubber prosthesis of Johannes Brahms. Here, I, as an amateur, have managed to build illegal historical collection of dental works... This

"I did not want to let the teeth fall into the wrong hands"

project is charitable and noble. I did not want to let the teeth of the composer fall into the wrong hands." (We might suggest here that they shouldn't have fallen into anyone's hands.)

In an email to Dr David Nelson on 14 July, Jajcay wrote: "Since my early childhood I have been interested in history of medicine. I was born in 1970. In 1977, I discovered a 1907 magazine about dental medicine in the cellar of an old building in Bratislava... In 1984, I tried to open and discover some of [the abandoned tombs in Bratislavan cemeteries] with my friend... I decided to describe [sic] a history of prosthetic dental

medicine... In 1990, I got to know the Central Cemetery in Vienna, and worked systematically until 1994... In 2002, I decided to highlight my vast collection." He allegedly has 400 artificial limbs and hundreds of human skulls.

In 2008, cemetery officials in Vienna reported that some graves had been tampered with. As a result, prosecutors investigated Jajcay for "disturbing the peace of the dead", but the case was dropped because the statute of limitations had run out. Austrian police again learned of the dastardly dental thefts when Jajcay released his videos. They started an investigation in May and found the composers' teeth were missing. They then ordered checks on the graves of other famous composers buried in the cemetery, including Beethoven, Schubert and Schoenberg. Jajcay could be facing from six months to 10 years in prison. *ABC News*, *D.Mail*, 3 July; *feelguide.com*, *inmozartsfootsteps.com*, 14 July 2012.

Love is all around...

Why have just one family when you can have two – or more?

● For 21 years, Andrew Ingham, 50, kept a second family secret from his wife and eight children. He fathered four more with his lover, and committed suicide when his incredible double life was exposed. The supermarket manager married Jacqueline (now 48) in 1983. Four years later the couple bought a house in Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, where Jacqueline still lives. In 1991, Ingham began a relationship with Anita Barrett (now 41), in Hoddeston, a 20-minute drive away. Within two years, she had their first child. Bizarrely, both women have the same birthday – so presumably Ingham had to think up convincing excuses for his absence at one of their birthday parties. His double life was discovered by his older children last December when they fitted together clues found on Facebook. The women met at last and Ingham moved into a small flat above a restaurant in Waltham Abbey, Essex, belonging to his friend Stuart Pryde. In March 2012 Pryde spotted a parking ticket on Ingham's car, let himself into the flat and found Ingham hanged. A note showed that he had taken his own life. *Sun*, 23 June 2012.



● Dr Norman Lewiston, a pioneering lung transplant specialist, teacher and researcher at Stanford University, California, died of a heart attack on 6 August 1991, aged 52. Diana Brownell, 52, of Palo Alto, became his wife in 1960, bore him three children, and it was in their home that he died. In 1985, he married Katy Mayer, 44, of nearby Los Altos, telling her he was divorced. She served as his 'public wife' at medical school functions. In 1989, he married Robyn L Phelps, 42, of San Diego, who also believed he was divorced. In May 1991, she began to suspect that he had other wives, and had the marriage annulled a week before he died. Diana and Katy didn't find out about his bigamy until they both showed up to claim the body. The

first two wives said that he was overweight. "Of course he was overweight", said Ms Phelps. "He was eating the meals three wives were feeding him." [AP] *Lewiston (ME) Sun-Journal, Guardian, D.Telegraph* 9 Oct 1991.

● Harold Ernest 'Jack' McCollum, 68, a Texas millionaire, was found with two different calibre bullets in his skull on 16 October 1986. He was lying face down in the mud on the banks of the Navasota River in Leon County, 50 miles (80km) southeast of Waco. He was born in 1918, in Lorena, about 15 miles (24km) south of Waco. In 1930, when Jack was 12, his father Harold, a mechanic, was gunned down during an argument about a car. The family was left with no savings, and the poverty left an indelible mark on young Jack. When he was shot 56 years later, he had almost \$5 million in life insurance policies.

McCollum's tangled married life was revealed after his death. He married Marguerite Wallace in Corsicana, Texas, in 1935, and moved with her to Huntsville in 1938, where he managed a tyre store. In 1957, four daughters later, he married Angeline Hester in Colorado and moved with her to Dallas, taking her two children by a previous marriage, whom he later adopted. In the 1960s, he founded Allied Tire Company in Waco.

He married Jimmie Fern Bell

in Las Vegas, Nevada, in 1973, Beryl Darby in Lubbock, Texas, in 1974 and Martha Morris in Germantown, Tennessee, in 1975. Within a year, he was dating another woman in Arlington, Texas, and he had several other steady woman friends across Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana. All the while, he maintained households in Waco, Dallas, Childress and Lubbock. He was apparently able to juggle the different marriages by convincing his families that business kept him constantly on the road.

In Waco he wore a hearing aid and seemed to be a bit frail, but not in Dallas.

Bell discovered the other wife when a waiter in a Lubbock restaurant told her that her husband had dined there with another woman the previous night. She divorced him in 1979. Morris and Darby had divorced him the year before, although Morris said she knew nothing about other wives.

Mike Kopp said his old friend McCollum hated to be alone. "It would be simple to say he was an evil man, but that was not the case. He was a tragic figure", said Kopp. Investigators thought his killing stemmed from a soured business deal, or he might have arranged it himself. Leon County Sheriff Royce Wilson discounted the possibility that a jealous wife had killed him. Records showed that his company, Allied Tires, once worth \$30 million, was heavily in debt. He owed \$1.3 million. During the last six months of his life, his affairs were unravelling. He drank heavily and there were sporadic memory lapses, possibly from Alzheimer's disease. "His death could not fit his life better", Kopp said. "It was mysterious, violent, sensational, out of the ordinary. His whole life was like that." *Houston (TX) Chronicle*, 16 Nov 1986, 7 June 1987; *Beaumont (TX) Enterprise*, 21 Nov, 29 Dec 1986; *St Louis Post-Dispatch*, 26 Jan 1987. For more secret bigamists, see FT179:26-27.

SIDELINES...

KILLER BARK

Joy McDonald, 29, of Odessa, Kansas, was charged with animal abuse after her chihuahuas' barking allegedly gave neighbour George Gamblin's chicken a heart attack. "All I did was complain," said Gamblin. "It was turned over to prosecutors." *D.Mirror*, 13 July 2012.

FLOATING GOLD

Charlie Naysmith, eight, discovered a 20oz (567g) lump of ambergris while walking along Hengistbury Head, near Bournemouth. Highly prized by perfume makers, the solidified whale vomit (used to preserve scent) was expected to fetch £40,000. *Sunday Times*, 2 Sept 2012.

GNOME OUTRAGE

Darlene Fraga of Windsor Locks, Connecticut, has a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary on her lawn. On 11 July, someone decapitated it and replaced the head with a garden gnome. Fraga reported the vandalism as a hate crime. *Hartford (CT) Courant*, 31 Aug 2012.

IN A FIX AT 166

A survey by Confused.com has shown that the unluckiest house number in the UK is 166 and the most 'jinxed' road to live on is Green Way. More than one in five people living at number 166 made a claim for damage or loss in the past five years. The second most 'unlucky' number is 227. *D.Telegraph*, 5 July 2012.





SIDELINES...

WHITE BISON

Hundreds of Native Americans – Lakota, Mohawk, Seneca and Cayuga – danced, sang songs and beat drums at Peter Fay's Mohawk bison farm in Goshen, Connecticut, on 28 July, after the birth of a white bison (not an albino) on 16 June, said to be as rare as one in 10 million births. Officially named Yellow Medicine Dancing Boy, the calf is seen as a symbol of hope and unity; some consider its birth sacred. *wnh.com*, 28 June; [AP] 30 July 2012. See **F778:6, 89:17, 138:18**.

EGG ASSAULT

Phillip Russell, 46, was jailed for six months by a court in Hastings, New Zealand, after hurling an ostrich egg at his wife on 5 July, bruising her chest, after her pet pig ran amok and damaged his power saw. [AFP] 24 Aug 2012.

INSIDES JOB

Wayne Carter, 43, of Hackensack, New Jersey, was critical in hospital on 29 May after repeatedly stabbing himself in the stomach. When police tried to disarm him, he threw some of his skin and intestines at them. Two cans of pepper spray failed to make him drop the kitchen knife, so the cops called on a SWAT team to help subdue him. *NorthJersey.com*, 29 May; *Sun*, 31 May 2012.

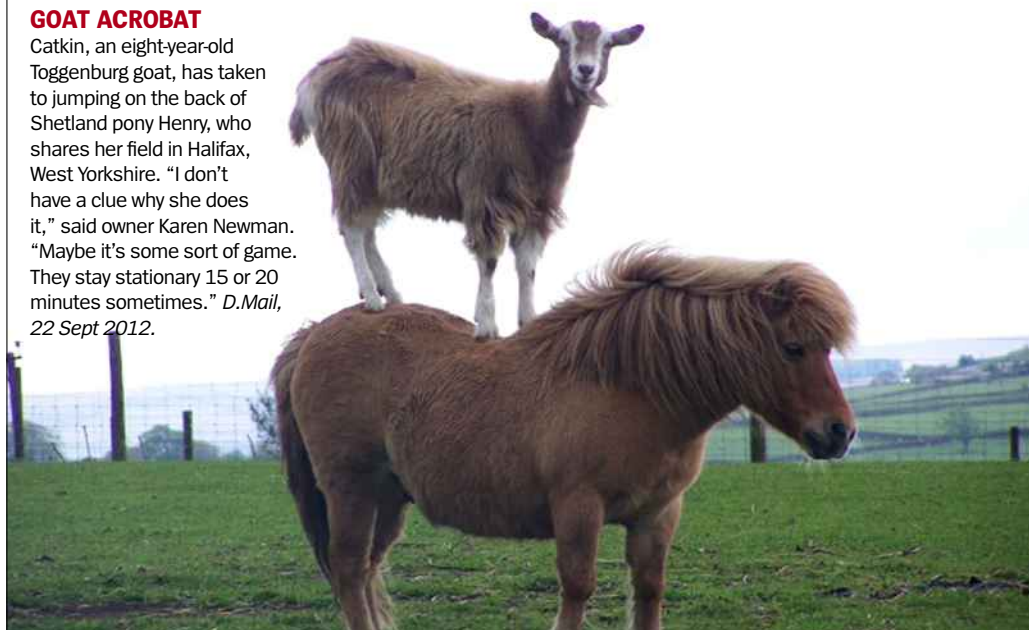


CLEVER CRITTERS

A ROUND-UP OF ANIMALS REPORTING TO A&E AND SCARPERING, PLUS A BAD FISH

GOAT ACROBAT

Catkin, an eight-year-old Toggenburg goat, has taken to jumping on the back of Shetland pony Henry, who shares her field in Halifax, West Yorkshire. "I don't have a clue why she does it," said owner Karen Newman. "Maybe it's some sort of game. They stay stationary 15 or 20 minutes sometimes." *D.Mail*, 22 Sept 2012.



ROSS PARRY

GET ME A DOCTOR

● A badger badly injured in a hit-and-run accident walked for three days to get to hospital. The creature – named Miles on account of the distance it must have travelled with its injury – was hit by a car on the A22 near Hailsham, East Sussex, and broke its leg. It then made its way to the East Sussex Wildlife Rescue and Ambulance Services Casualty Care Unit at Horsebridge. It must have battled through brambles, across roads and through hedgerows. Volunteer Tim McKenzie spotted it around 3am on 14 March 2008. "We've got so many animals in there at the moment so I was down there just checking they were OK," he said. "Then I noticed the badger out the back. She looked up at me as if to say 'Help me' and then just sat there. She got through our big security fence somehow and it wasn't like it was just passing through here. She hobbled up to the hospital and just sat, waiting." The following morning the badger, which was about three years old, was taken to a vet for an operation to repair its leg. "Normally if a badger breaks its legs it's the end for them because they can't forage

A badger walked for three days to get to hospital

for food, they can't build a sett," said Mr McKenzie. The operation was a success and Miles was due to be released back into the wild. *Brighton Argus*, 16 Mar 2008.

● When the doors of the emergency room in San Juan Regional Medical Center, Farmington, New Mexico, slid open on 14 March 2010, a dog limped in with blood on its nose and paw, and a puncture hole in one leg. The animal, which appeared to have been attacked by another dog, was taken to an animal shelter and later claimed by its owner. *MX News (Sydney)*, 17 Mar 2010.

● A Canada goose with a 26in (66cm) arrow sticking out of its chest landed at just the right place. The wounded bird was picked up by retired vet Bernard

Levine in the back yard of his home in Toms River, New Jersey. He performed surgery and took the goose to a bird sanctuary. *Metro*, 29 April 2010.

● Bert, a two-year-old budgerigar, sneaked through a 2in (5cm) gap in his cage while it was in the Brown family's garden in York and made his escape on 27 June 2011. Six days later he handed himself in at the RSPCA rescue centre a mile away. "We called them first because we were thinking of getting another budgie to replace Bert," said Martin Brown. "A few minutes later they rang us back to say a dog walker had found Bert on the grass outside the door to the centre." Helen Brown said: "It's definitely him because he chirped when we called his name. He's never been there before so it's a total coincidence." (Or did he know?) Marie Sandell from the RSPCA centre said: "It is very surprising because 95 per cent of budgies are never found when they go missing. Bert was hungry and a little cold, so we fed him and gave him antibiotics." *D.Mail*, *D.Mirror*, 9 July 2011.

● A smooth newt in urgent need of rehydration crawled into the

regional headquarters of Natural England in Newborn Riverside, Newcastle, through its revolving doors. Staff spotted the aquatic amphibian in the reception area. Dr Dave Mitchell improvised an emergency pond, the visitor recovered, and after a few hours was released into suitable habitat in the locality. Dr Mitchell said: "The newt probably hatched out last spring in a small pond or seasonal puddle in the riverside area. This one was certainly heading for shelter in a cool, damp, dark place, but somehow got through a set of revolving doors and ended up in our reception." *Northern Echo*, 9 Jan 2012.

GREAT ESCAPES

- Using fallen branches, five chimpanzees made a ladder and scaled a wall at Hanover's Experience Zoo on 11 July and mixed with the 2,500-strong crowd as staff rushed to get people to the exits and 27 police cars plus ambulances raced to the scene. Keepers armed with pepper spray began Operation Round Up as four of the chimps decided it was better back in their enclosure anyway, although ringleader Maxi was a bit harder to coax back. Two people were slightly injured. *D.Express*, 13 July 2012.

- Also in Germany, authorities were hunting high and low for a kangaroo that escaped from an animal park in Hunsrück, west of Frankfurt, with the help of a fox and a wild boar. During the night of 11 August, three kangaroos named Skippy, Jack and Mick bounded through a hole in the fence of their enclosure made by a helpful fox. One stayed within the park grounds and was swiftly recaptured; the other two scrambled to freedom through a hole dug by a wild boar under the park's perimeter fence. Vets snared one after a long chase, said the park's deputy head, Michael Hoffman, but the third was still at large two days later. As it fed on vegetables and grasses, it should have found plenty to forage. *telegraph.co.uk*, 13 Aug 2012.

- Meanwhile in Japan, some pesky penguins in the city of

Suzaka were giving zookeepers a hard time. A pair of three-month-old chicks escaped from the city's zoo in early August by jumping off a slide. Keepers attached boards to the foot of the slide, but two days later another chick got out by crawling under the fence. Then early on 21 August, that same bird made another successful escape by hopping over the fence. A few hours later, it was spotted swimming in a nearby pond. Officials said they planned to keep the four adventurous birds in an indoor cage with concrete walls and nets, at least temporarily. Japan is no stranger to rogue penguins. One broke out of Tokyo Sea Life Park and was only caught on 24 May after 82 days on the loose [FT293:12]. *abcnews*, 21 Aug 2012.

- A scarlet ibis escaped from its enclosure in Edinburgh Zoo on 21 August with the help of a squirrel. It was spotted later that day three miles (4.8km) away in the New Town area of the city, and the following day it had reached the beach at Seafield, six miles (9.6km) from the zoo. It is believed the exotic South American bird made its dash for freedom after the netting covering its enclosure was chewed through by a squirrel. Darren McCarty, the head of animals at the zoo, said: "We are a bit concerned about it as it is so brightly coloured and could be attacked by other native birds due

to its unusual plumage. We're also extremely surprised that it flew so far." *D.Telegraph*, 23 Aug 2012.

RANSACKED BY CATFISH

Xu Xianmin and his wife thought their one-room home in Changji, Xinjiang Province, China, was empty when they locked up to leave for their jobs as sanitation workers at 4am – but when they came back at 9.30am, it had been trashed. "I thought my home had been ransacked by thieves," said Xu. "The table was turned over, and stacked plastic bottles were everywhere. When I was picking up things from the other side of the table, I suddenly touched something cold and slippery, and it was moving!" After asking neighbours for help, they found a huge catfish on the floor. A baffled Xu added: "No thieves would leave a giant fish in the house while stealing nothing. And it's not possible that someone threw the fish in through the window, as the door and windows were locked. All we can imagine is that the catfish somehow sneaked into the house in the time between us opening the door and then leaving for work." To add to the mystery, the couple's home lies in a residential area with no river or pond nearby. A local aquatic expert said the catfish was at least three years old and would be able to survive out of water for a relatively long time. *web.orange.co.uk*, 16 Aug 2012.



Xu Xianmin and his wife wrestle with their piscine intruder.

SIDELINES...

I STAND, THEREFORE I AM

Santosh Kumar Singh, 32, an Indian cook, has spent nine years trying to convince bureaucrats that he is alive after his high caste relatives declared him dead because he had married a Dalit (untouchable). In June he registered as one of 12 candidates for the presidency. His manifesto had only one pledge: to be recognised as alive. *D.Telegraph*, 23 June 2012.

BOAT BURIAL

Stan Bennett of St John's, Newfoundland, died after a lengthy battle with cancer. On 28 July, the day he was due to be buried, his shrimp boat took on water while tied to a wharf in St John's Harbour. It continued sinking, despite efforts from the Coast Guard to pull it up. The cause of the problem was unknown. *CBC News*, 30 July 2012.

TWEETING HIS ADDRESS

A budgerigar called Piko-chan escaped from a house in the Sagami-hara district of Yokohama, Japan, on 29 April and made his way to the city centre hotel, where he was caught. He was taken to a police station, where on 1 May he recited his exact address and was returned to his owner, Fumie Takahashi, 64. Piko-chan had flown away before, so she had taught him his address and telephone number. *D.Telegraph*, 3 May; *Irish Times*, 5 May 2012.

TOMB DWELLER

Adriana Villareal, 43, has been spending days in the burial vault of her husband Sergio Yede who died two years ago, aged 28. When police investigated at the San Lazaro cemetery in Dos de Mayo, Argentina, she greeted them in her pyjamas. She had a chair, cooker, radio, computer and Internet access in the vault, and slept in a bed next to the embalmed body. She said she visited "three times a year and stayed three or four nights". *Sun*, 16 June 2012.

QUIRKY CHINA NEWS / REX FEATURES



SIDELINES...

GHOST BABY

John Gore and his partner Sonia Jones believe their house in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, is haunted after photographing a baby ghost in their living room. Mr Gore, 43, spotted the toddler-sized figure in a picture he took of his cats. Neighbours have since told him of a cot death in the house several years ago. *Metro*, 19 June 2012.

MADNESS IN MEXICO

María del Carmen Ríos García, 28, gouged out her little boy's eyes with a spoon in a satanic ritual to save the planet. On 25 May 2012, five-year-old Fernando was in a serious condition in Mexico City and six of his family were in jail. "They were obsessed with religion," said a neighbour. "They said the Devil was nearby and the end of the world was coming." *[AP] Sun*, 26 May 2012.

MARBLES MISSING

Dale Whitmell, 40, from Ontario in Canada, accidentally shot himself in the head while trying to kill a mouse with the butt of his rifle. He allegedly didn't know the gun was loaded. The bullet grazed his forehead, but he avoided serious injury. *Sunday Mercury*, 29 July 2012.

LOW MAINTENANCE

A woman who can't have children has spent £20,000 on 97 plastic babies. Vikki Andrews, 19, a student and part-time barmaid from Newbury, Berkshire, began buying them three years ago after being diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome. Now her bedroom is filled with "reborn dolls", made with hand-moulded plastic and human hair. *Sun*, 8 Mar 2012.

STRANGE ADOPTION

A cat adopted five chicks in China. The unlikely friendship began when Li Tongfa left the door of a birdcage open and the cat clambered in. At the time of the report, cat and chicks had been living together for two weeks. *MX News (Sydney)*, 10 July 2012.

PRETTY IN PINK



A grey squirrel that somehow turned pink appeared in Cullompton, Devon, last July. The rodent had apparently received a paint job, but why, when and where remained a mystery. *Metro*, 11 July 2012.

Jean Moles, of Pitshanger Lane, Ealing, west London, was astonished to see this peculiar pigeon on 4 August. "It sits on the flat roof next to my window," she said. "It's pink with white streaks and a grey head. I've never seen one in my 74 years. The Frenchman next door took a picture of it. He said he'd never seen anything like it either." An extremely rare species of pink pigeon – *Nesoenas mayeri* – is found on Mauritius, thousands of miles away in the Indian Ocean, but it has grey wings, unlike the Ealing bird.

Tim Webb from the RSPB was at a loss to explain the bird's startling plumage, but pointed out that regularly eating foods with high levels of carotene and canthaxanthin (harmless natural food pigments) could change the colour of its feathers. Pink flamingos get their colour from feeding on shrimp. Alternatively, the pigeon could have been dyed deliberately or splashed in a puddle of stained water. *telegraph.co.uk*, 10 Aug 2012.



ALWAYS FREE UK P&P



PHONE ORDERS
0115 8440088



"COOL SHIRTS!" JONATHAN ROSS

NERDOH.COM



DON'T GO OUT WITHOUT YOUR MOVIE TEE!

WorldMags.net



ALL SHAPES AND SIZES

A PRIZE-WINNING TIDDLER OF A SQUID, A VAST FLOATING RAFT OF PUMICE AND THE MOTHER OF ALL PEARLS...



ABOVE: The trophy-winning squid landed by Mr Thambithurai. BELOW: The vast raft of pumice drifting in the South Pacific.

CHAMPION SQUID TIDDLER

At the beginning of May, anglers from all over the country travelled to Brighton, East Sussex, for the fifth annual All England Squid Championships, at which the coveted trophy is awarded for the biggest squid. However, strong winds whipped up a heavy and murky sea – conditions not conducive to squid fishing. Squid are sight predators, but they weren't able to see the fishermen's bait. It seemed that none would be caught until Davide Thambithurai spotted a tiny specimen on his squid jig lure just as he was about to cast off again. Mr Thambithurai, 28, an aquatic ecologist from Portsmouth who won last year's event with a 61cm (2ft) squid, took a photo and measured it at just 1cm (about a third of an inch) before throwing it back. (The measurements refer to the length of body behind the head.) He won the 2012 title

The squid measured in at a third of an inch

and a new £210 rod. The other 73 weather-weary competitors, who had caught diddly-squat in five hours, gave ironic cheers and nicknamed the minuscule winner "kraken" after the mythical sea monster. *D.Telegraph, D.Mail, 3 May 2012.*

PUMICE RAFT

A huge cluster of floating volcanic rocks covering almost 10,000 sq miles (26,000km²) was spotted on 9 August, drifting in the South Pacific, about 600 miles (1,000km) off the coast of New Zealand. A maritime patrol aircraft, RNZAF Orion, reported

it to HMNZS Canterbury, a Royal New Zealand Air Force ship on her way from Auckland to Raoul Island. The strange phenomenon, consisting of golfball-sized pumice rocks expelled from an underwater volcano, measured a whopping 300 miles (483km) in length and more than 30 miles (48km) wide. Lieutenant Tim

Oscar said it was "the weirdest thing I've seen in 18 years at sea... As far ahead as I could observe was a raft of pumice moving up and down with the swell. The rock looked to be sitting two feet [60cm] above the surface of the waves and lit up a brilliant white colour in the spotlight. It looked exactly like the edge of an ice shelf." Pumice, which forms when volcanic lava cools quickly, is full of pores due to gas getting trapped inside as the lava hardens. Recent research suggests it replenishes the Great Barrier Reef with new coral. Scientists aboard the ship initially thought the thick mass of porous rocks had come from an underwater volcano called the Monowai seamount along the so-called Kermadec arc, which had erupted on 3 August, but NASA later revealed that an airline pilot reported seeing the pumice as early as 1 August. NASA satellite images and other sleuthing science eventually pinpointed an erupting undersea volcano called the Havre Seamount as the culprit: images taken on 19 July revealed ash-stained water, grey pumice and a volcanic plume. The eruption had tapered off by 21 July, leaving behind the sprawling raft of pumice. By 13 August, winds and currents had spread the rocks into a series of twisted filaments



2012 WATCH

PETER BROOKESMITH SIFTS THROUGH THE LATEST DOOMSDAY PROPHECIES

COMING SOON: A PLANET NEAR US

Now and then your eyes come out on stalks in surprise at one strange thing or another. But do you lack confidence because your stalks always seem just a little shorter than other people's? Then here's the perfect one-time stalk-enlarging solution. We guarantee that *in just one evening*, in the privacy of your own home, *your stalks* will grow into stalks that will *astound* your family, friends – and even complete strangers! And it's *absolutely* free! Just make sure you've got a completely free evening, and log on to Nancy Lieders's website, www.zetataalk.com, and let Mr Mouse frolic among the links.

Nancy once claimed that Comet Hale-Bopp didn't exist, but was a NASA fiction designed to distract our attention from the arrival of the 12th Planet, *alias* Planet X, *alias* Nibiru. She later retracted this bit of whimsy with an involved story about how the Zeta Reticulans had misled her. Nancy regularly channels the Zeta Reticulans – of whom she has met four different kinds, along with 14 other sorts of aliens – and they tell her all about Planet X. She inherited (or filched) Planet X from Zecharia Sitchin, who in turn learned about it by translating ancient Sumerian texts in a manner wholly startling to traditional scholars. Originally Nancy, or the Zetans, said it was going to collide with Earth in 2003. Ermm... Now Planet X has tucked itself into Earth's orbit on the other side of the Sun from us: hence we can't see it. Sooner or later (hints point to December 2012) this steerable planet will whizz toward us, north pole first. Our magnetic north pole will be repelled, so the Earth will tip – the usual disasters ensue – and then eventually stabilise with a new north pole just off the coast of Brazil, and the south pole at the (by then submerged) tip of India.

And that's the saner part of her stuff. It's complicated somewhat by her – or the Zetans' (fibbing again?) – 1995 claim that Earth already has a "dead twin" in orbit opposite us. We don't officially know about this because it has "been omitted from astronomy lists due to the unease those who were involved in Alternative 3 have about their past actions. Mankind's awareness of this dead twin arose during the discussions that MJ12 had early on with aliens... just prior to the time of Roswell. During that time, ALL information learned from aliens was withheld from the public... Who is aware of the Earth's dead twin? NASA and JPL and a handful of astronomers working at the major observatories. Just as the approach of the 12th Planet, i.e. Planet X, is known to these individuals and kept from the public, information on the dead twin is a forbidden subject. This is termed a matter

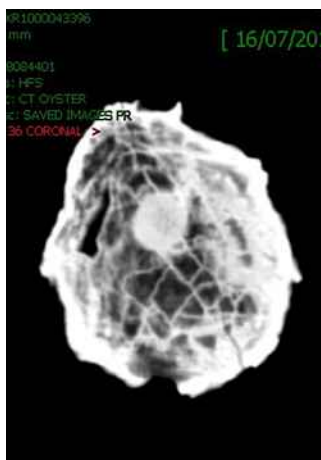
of national security, subject to imprisonment and other harsh punishment, and... even an accidental death at the hands of those who fear the release of this information." Mythic *bouillabaisse*, anyone?

Nancy Lieders remains unrepentantly alive, however, and can take comfort in the truth of her prophecy from the fans who send her photographs of Planet X masquerading as reflections in double glazed windows, lens flares, and so on. We haven't even touched on the role of autism, crop circles, spontaneous human combustion, 'Israeli aggression', the Ebola virus – you name it, it's in the Zetans' eye-popping mix. Take me to your Lieders, indeed.

CALENDAR GIRL

Mother Shipton (Ursula Southell, 1488-1561) is Yorkshire's answer to Nostradamus.

According to the legend, her dad was the Devil, and she herself was, as they say, never an oil painting. One of her prophecies runs: "A fiery dragon will cross the sky/Six times before the earth shall die./Mankind will tremble and frightened be/For the six heralds in this prophecy./For seven days and seven nights/Man will watch this awesome sight./The tides will rise beyond their ken/To bite away the shores and then/The mountains will begin to roar/And earthquakes split the plain to shore." Doom-and-gloomists have decided this refers to December 2012. If Ma Shipton's verses lack an authentic 16th-century ring, it's because her apocalyptic prophecies were cooked up by a certain Charles Hindley, who published them in 1862. Sigh.



spread over an area about 280 by 160 miles (450 x 257km). The phenomenon was unrelated to increased volcanic activity in New Zealand, including an eruption at Mount Tongariro that sent an ash cloud 20,000ft (6,000m) feet into the atmosphere. [AP] 10 Aug; LiveScience.com, 14 Aug 2012.

WORLD'S LARGEST PEARL?

A 145 million-year-old oyster fossil trawled up off the south coast of England may contain what the press has inevitably called "the mother of all pearls". An MRI scan (above) revealed a smooth sphere about the size of a golf ball; but experts say they will not explore the oyster's contents any further because this would involve destroying the fossil. It was found in the nets of a fishing boat in the Solent and displayed at a local fishmonger's before being given to the Blue Reef Aquarium in Portsmouth for safekeeping. "Oysters can be aged by annual growth rings on their shells and we have counted more than 200 rings on this oyster, making it an extremely long-lived individual," said Lindsay Holloway, who works at the aquarium. The oyster measures about 7in (18cm) across, roughly 10 times the size of a modern oyster, which typically lives for a mere six years. "To have a pearl the size of a golf ball would be exceptional," said jewellery expert Geoffrey Munn. "The biggest that have been recorded are about half that size." *The News (Portsmouth)*, *D.Mail*, 26 June 2012.





THE BELYAEV FOXES

Out of the a Soviet-era scientific clash emerged a remarkable breeding experiment – one that we may be unwittingly replicating across Britain's cities says **DAVID HAMBLING**

Evolution can be pushed into fast-forward, with profound changes occurring over the course of a few generations. We know this thanks to a remarkable Russian scientist, Dmitry Belyaev, whose battle against the prevailing orthodoxy was a triumph of damned data against institutional intractability. But the implications of his results have yet to be fully understood.

By the 1930s, Trofim Lysenko dominated Soviet agriculture. Politics demanded that the Russians have their own theories rather than slavishly following the West. Lysenko rejected Mendelian genetics and promoted an alternative theory under which acquired characteristics could be inherited. He had developed an important method of treating wheat with cold and moisture so it would sprout in spring rather than in winter, and claimed that subsequent generations of wheat from the crop would have the same late-sprouting trait.

This belief stemmed from Lamarck, Darwin's less successful rival. It implies, among other things, that if you raised someone as the perfect citizen, their children would inherit the same attitude. It's no coincidence that there is a character called Lysenko in *Brave New World*, written in 1931 at the height his power.

By contrast, Belyaev believed that everything could be explained by genetics and selective breeding. In 1959 he was in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk, having been forced out of a post in Moscow due to his unorthodox views. He started working with silver foxes, farmed for fur, ostensibly looking at how breeding changes fur quality.

Darwin noted that domestic animals differ from their wild counterparts in ways that are consistent across different animals, from dogs to sheep and cattle, including having multi-coloured or piebald coats, floppy ears and changes in reproductive cycle. Belyaev believed that these traits might be genetically linked to tameness. While Darwin



Lyudmilla Trut has carried on Belyaev's work, raising elite fox cubs as pets

thought domestication took place over millennia, Belyaev believed it might be much faster.

Belyaev's selective breeding programme is simple. Starting from the age of one month, an experimenter offers a fox cub food, repeating the test monthly for six months. The foxes are then scored on their response: aggressive or shy foxes are rated Class III; foxes who allow themselves to be handled but are not friendly are Class II; foxes that are friendly, wagging their tails and whining at experimenters, are Class I. The Class I foxes were then selected for breeding the next generation.

After six generations, a new category of IE was introduced: 'elite' domesticated animals which actively seek human attention, whimpering and licking experimenters' hands and faces like dogs. By selective breeding, the proportion of elite rose from 18 per cent by the 10th

generation to 80 per cent by the 30th.¹

After 40 or so generations, the current population are now effectively domesticated animals which enjoy human company and compete for attention. As Belyaev expected, there have been physical changes as well, including a change of coat colour with the foxes becoming piebald (that is, having white patches), many having star-shaped patterns on their faces. They also tend to have floppy ears, and some have curly, dog-like tails. The foxes are also losing their characteristic musky smell, and come into heat twice a year like dogs instead of once a year like foxes. Perhaps ironically for the industry that started the work, the white patches make Belyaev's foxes useless for fur farming.

Belyaev also experimented with rats from 1972. This time he took a double track, selecting for tameness in one group and aggression in another. The resulting hyper-aggressive rodents are a screaming, biting rat-phobic's nightmare. One visiting geneticist remarked: "I got the feeling that 10 or 20 of them would probably kill me if they got out of their cages." The tame rats often had white

patches or socks, which were uncommon in the aggressive strain.

Belyaev died in 1985, but he had already won. In the 1960s the tide of Soviet science had turned. With Stalin dead there was no political support for Lysenkoism when it was publicly denounced by other Russian scientists. Lysenko was unceremoniously deposed as director of the Institute of Genetics and the bad science he had promoted was quietly swept away.

We still know little about the genetic link between colouring and temperament. Researchers believe it is because the neurotransmitters and hormones responsible for the stress response, which is commoner among non-domesticated animals, are also linked with pigment production. Other studies have confirmed a correlation; usually lighter animals are tamer, but cats are, as always, perverse, with black cats found to be the most placid.²

Meanwhile we have a gigantic free-range experiment being carried out across urban Britain. A survey by the BBC indicated that up to 10 per cent of urban dwellers feed foxes, and the foxes that have least fear of people are likely to be the most successful at surviving and breeding.³

Lyudmilla Trut (pictured above with one of the tame silver foxes), who has carried on Belyaev's work at the Institute of Cytology and Genetics in Novosibirsk,⁴ has raised elite fox pups as pets. She says they are "as devoted as dogs but as independent as cats, capable of forming deep-rooted pair bonds with human beings." At one point the Institute sold the foxes as pets.

This suggests that rather than the child-savaging monsters that the *Daily Mail* fears, we may be selectively breeding a new strain of fox which, like Belyaev's elite, want to be domestic animals. And if his results are anything to go by, it's likely to happen sooner rather than later.

NOTES

- 1 www.hum.utah.edu/~bhenham/2510%20Spring%2009/Behavior%20Genetics/Farm-Fox%20Experiment.pdf
- 2 www.ratbehavior.org/CoatColor.htm
- 3 www.bbc.co.uk/nature/17270249
- 4 www.bionet.nsc.ru/booklet/Engl/EngLaboratories/

Write Your Way To A New Career!

Writers Bureau Celebrates Twenty-three Years of Helping New Writers

by Nick Daws

When distance-learning pioneer Ernest Metcalfe founded The Writers Bureau in the late 1980s, he can hardly have dared hope that twenty-three years on it would be acknowledged as Britain's leading writing school. Yet so it proved, with thousands of Writers Bureau students seeing their work in print for the first time. And, for many of those who persevered with their writing, the dream of becoming a successful writer has turned into reality.

Students such as Tim Skelton. An engineer by profession, he had always harboured an ambition to write, and at the age of 40 signed up with The Writers Bureau. The decision changed his life: "My writing career took off exponentially. I started appearing regularly in lifestyle and in-flight magazines. The following year I was commissioned by Bradt Travel Guides to write a guidebook to Luxembourg.

"My writing career took off exponentially."

I've appeared in The Times and The Independent, and updated guidebooks for Fodor's, Thomas Cook, and the AA."

Another student who benefited was Hazel McHaffie. Hazel wanted to make her academic work in Medical Ethics more accessible to people, and decided to write the themes into novels. Following her Writers Bureau course, Hazel has had five novels published, and appeared at the Edinburgh International Book Festival. She also has her own website at www.hazelmchaffie.com.

Sometimes studying with The Writers Bureau takes students down new and unexpected paths. Patricia Holness originally enrolled on The Writers Bureau's Writing for Children course. However, she soon realised that what she was learning applied to other types of writing as well.

She is now a full-time writer, regularly selling short stories for both

children and adults. She also has a monthly column in Devon Life.

These are just a selection from the inspirational true stories from students of The Writers Bureau. There's no reason why YOU couldn't be their next success story. With a 15-day free trial and money-back guarantee, there is nothing to lose and potentially a whole new career to gain! So why not visit their website at www.writersbureau.com or call on Freephone 0800 856 2008 for more information?

Hazel McHaffie



Tim Skelton



How To Become A Successful Writer!

As a freelance writer, you can earn very good money in your spare time, writing the stories, articles, books, scripts etc that editors and publishers want. Millions of pounds are paid annually in fees and royalties. Earning your share can be fun, profitable and creatively most fulfilling.

To help you become a successful writer we offer you a first-class, home-study course from professional writers – with individual guidance from expert tutors and flexible tuition tailored to your own requirements. You are shown how to make the most of your abilities, where to find ideas, how to turn them into publishable writing and how to sell them. In short, we show you exactly how to become a published writer. **If you want writing success – this is the way to start!**

Whatever your writing ambitions, we can help you to achieve them. For we give you an effective, stimulating and most enjoyable creative writing course... appreciated by students and acclaimed by experts.

It's ideal for beginners. No previous experience or special background is required. You write and study at your own pace – you do not have to rush – as you have four years to complete your course.

Many others have been successful this way. If they can do it – why can't you?

We are so confident that we can help you become a published writer that we give you a **full refund guarantee**. If you have not earned your course fees from published writing by the time you finish the course, we will refund them in full.

If you want to be a writer start by requesting a free copy of our prospectus 'Write and be Published'. Please call our freephone number or visit our website NOW.

COURSE FEATURES

- 30 FACT-PACKED MODULES
- 3 SPECIALIST HANDBOOKS
- 20 WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS
- ADVISORY SERVICE
- TUTORIAL SUPPORT
- FLEXIBLE STUDY PROGRAMME
- STUDENT COMMUNITY AREA
- HOW TO PRESENT YOUR WORK
- HOW TO SELL YOUR WRITING
- 15 DAY TRIAL PERIOD
- FULL REFUND GUARANTEE

www.writersbureau.com

FREEPHONE
24 HOURS

0800 856 2008

Save £30
Quote
AT

email: 12W1@writersbureau.com
Please include your name and address

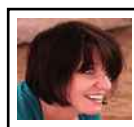


AWARD WINNING WRITER
Christina Jones, Oxfordshire

"So far, I have had eighteen novels published. The Writers Bureau helped make this possible for me. Within six months of enrolling on my course I was having work commissioned by editors and I still work regularly for magazines."

Michael Foley, Essex

"Completing The Writers Bureau course has made it possible for me to attain my life-long ambition of becoming a published writer. The level of success I have achieved has far outweighed what I was hoping for when beginning the course. By the end of this year I should have eight books already published and hopefully two more finished."



Cindy-Lou Dale, Kent

"I thought you'd like to know that seven years since doing my course at WB I've been published in more than 150 magazines around the world. I've now got to the stage where I'm turning down all-inclusive exotic press trips!"

Please send me free details on how to become a successful, freelance writer:

NAME

ADDRESS

POST CODE

EMAIL

Freepost RSSK-JZAC-JCJG

The Writers Bureau

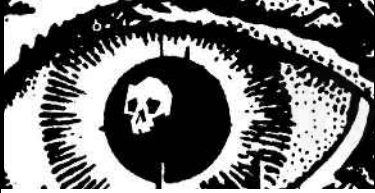
Dept AT12811

Manchester

M3 1LE

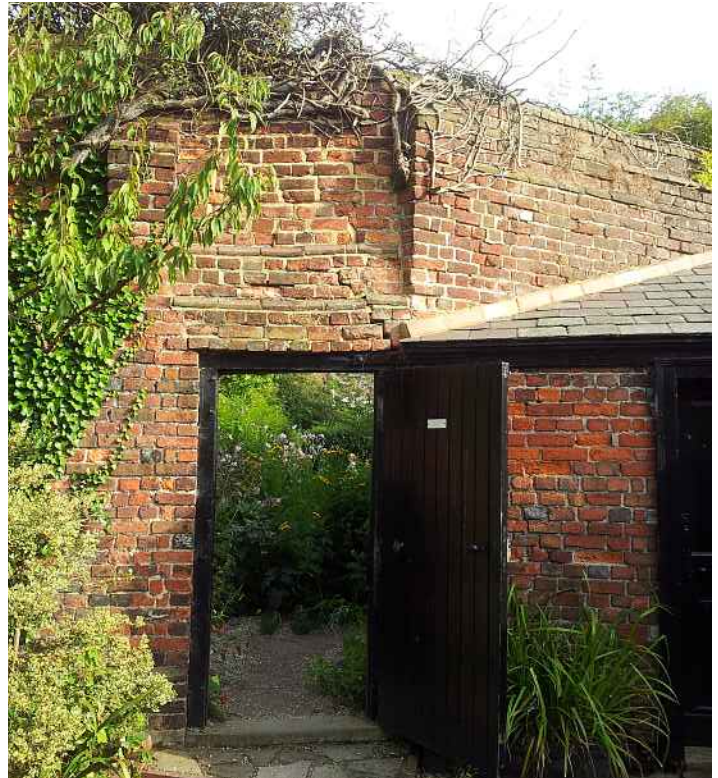
Members of The British Institute
for Learning and Development and ABCC

Writers Bureau **23** Years of Success



GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE looks at ghost writers' ghostly experiences and a Cumbrian pub haunting



BOTH PICS: ALAN MURDIE

BELOW: Horror writer James Herbert. **ABOVE LEFT:** Lamb House. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The "door in the wall" by which E F Benson (facing page) saw a mysterious figure pass.

HORROR WRITERS AND THEIR GHOST EXPERIENCES

On 3 September 2012, veteran horror writer James Herbert, author of *The Rats*, *The Fog* and *The Dark*, told audiences of BBC's TV Breakfast programme about his own experience of seeing a ghost in Spain. He was invited onto the programme to discuss an adaption of his story *The Secret of Crickley Hall*, featuring parapsychologist 'James Ash', who also appears in one of his novels. Herbert previously created the character of ghost hunter Chris Bishop for his novel *The Dark* in 1980, modelling him on the late Andrew Green (1927-2004), who was one of Britain's most active ghost hunters for 60 years.

Herbert told presenters of his own ghost sighting, which occurred in the presence of two friends, Bob Young and David Moores, former chairman of Liverpool Football Club. The trio were holidaying together with their wives "at a beautiful palace of a villa" owned by Moores in Marbella, Spain. The experience occurred at about 2.30am when their wives had retired to bed but the three men had remained sitting up still drinking and talking. From where they were seated, both Herbert and Young had a view through an open door into the hallway of the villa, while Moores was positioned facing them with his back to the door. Herbert told how suddenly, "Bob nudged me and said did you see that?" I said, "No, what?" and he said, "Someone went past the door!".

"BEING A HORROR WRITER, I WAS UP LIKE A SHOT... I WAS OUT OF THAT DOOR WITHIN SECONDS"



Herbert saw nothing, but "About 10 minutes later the same figure walked back past the door. Now being a horror writer – a ghost writer – I was up like a shot... I ran after it. I was out of that door within two, one and half seconds... Just a marble hall with a marble stair –

empty!". Moores, having his back to the door, didn't see the figure, laughing the sighting off as they had been drinking.

This point was taken up in light-hearted fashion by the TV interviewers, but while Herbert admitting he was drinking, he dismissed the insinuation that he was hallucinating, stating: "I am a mean drinker – I can take a drink!".

After his experience, Herbert asked if there was any history to the villa, but neither Dave Moores nor anyone else could shed any light on what might lie behind the apparition.

Interestingly, this experience involving a famous ghost and horror story writer seeing an apparition walk past a doorway whilst relaxing with two friends has parallels with a little-known ghost sighting that occurred over 70 years ago, at Lamb House in Rye, Sussex. The writer was EF Benson, the author of many fine ghost and horror stories, perhaps in part inspired by his being the son of Archbishop Benson, one of the founders of the Ghost Club. EF Benson recounted his experience in his posthumously published autobiography *Final Edition* (1940):

"On a windless summer day two friends, of whom the Vicar of Rye was one, were lunching with me and afterwards we strolled down to the secret garden. It was a brilliant, broiling day and we seated ourselves in a strip of shade close to the door in the wall which communicated with the other garden. This door was open; two of our chairs, the Vicar's and mine, faced it, the other had its back to it.

"And I saw the figure of a man walk past this open doorway. He was dressed in black and he wore a cape the right wing of which, as he passed, he threw across his chest, over his left shoulder. His head was turned away and I did not see his face. The glimpse I got of him was very short, for two steps took him past the open doorway, and the wall behind the poplars hid him again.

"Simultaneously the vicar jumped out of his chair, exclaiming, 'Who on earth was that?' It was only a step to the open door and there, beyond, the garden lay, basking in the sun and empty of any human presence...

"Speaking of their experiences the vicar told me what he had seen; it was exactly what I had seen, except that our visitor had worn hose, which I had not noticed.

"Now the odd feature about this meaningless apparition is that the first time this visitor appeared he was seen simultaneously by two people whose impressions as to his general mien and his gesture with his cloak completely tallied with each other. There was no legend about such an appearance which could have predisposed either of them to have imagined that he saw anything at all, and the broad sunlight certainly did not lend itself to any conjuring up of a black moving figure. Not long afterwards it was seen again in broad daylight by the vicar at the same spot; just a glimpse and then it vanished. I was with him but I saw nothing. Since then I think I have seen it once in the evening on the lawn near the garden-room, but it was dusk and I may have constructed some fleeting composition of light and shadow into the same figure... I have no doubt whatever that the vicar and I saw something that had no existence in the material world."

The vicar in question was the Revd. Prebendary John Fowler. In a statement he later provided after Benson's death to the Society for Psychical Research Fowler stated: "None of us three had, I believe, been thinking of 'ghosts' – at any rate I had not and no word was spoken of them by any of us, that 'windless summer day'. Why should 'he' be there and with a cloak too? But there are often these 'Whys?'. I thought it was someone, not something, and sprang up to see who he was."

Now owned by the National Trust, Lamb House perhaps deserved to be haunted. It was the home of Henry James, author of the classic psychological ghost tale *The Turn of the Screw*, who wrote a number of his novels at the property. The house became a centre for James's wide circle of literary friends, including HG Wells, Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, GK Chesterton, Hillarie Belloc, Compton Mackenzie and Ford Madox Ford. James spent the majority of

his time in Rye but died in London in 1916. It was his wish to return to Lamb House during his final days but he was too ill to be moved.

After his death the lease was taken over by EF Benson, who also conducted tests with trance mediums at the property in the mid-1920s. These included an attempt by mediums to divine the contents of a sealed box left by Benson's deceased mother as a survival test three years earlier. The tests failed with none of the mediums guessing the nature of the object, but it was noted that many of the answers obtained independently from each other were similar, which Benson ascribed to an unusual coincidence or perhaps telepathy between them.

There are a number of notable similarities between the two experiences recounted by Benson and Herbert, with both sightings occurring when the witnesses were in a relaxed frame of mind. It would be interesting to learn if Herbert has ever read or heard of Benson's experience. Combining the two surnames of the writers, one also comes up 'Benson Herbert' which was the name of the founder and director of the Downtown Paraphysical Laboratory in Wiltshire in the 1960s and 1970s, which collected numerous ghost experiences from around the UK, but perhaps it doesn't do to press such coincidences too far in searching for deeper meanings and connections...

Sources: *James Herbert BBC Breakfast Television*, 3 September 2012 at www.bbc.co.uk/news/19463081; *EF Benson in Final Edition*, pp.257-258; *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, vol.32 p.119-120 Nov-Dec 1941.

GHOST OF MITT ROMNEY'S RELATION IN KENDAL?

At the end of September 2012 the *Westmorland Gazette* ran a story claiming the ghost of a distant relative of Mitt Romney – the Republican Party nominee running against Barack Obama – is haunting a pub called 'Romneys' in Kendal. A ghost locally identified as a 19th century woman, Agnes Romney, has been sighted by workers at the pub. In life Agnes Romney is believed to have been the sister of Mitt's great great grandfather. She was also related to an 18th century artist George Romney (1734-1802) who lived nearby.

The assistant manager of Romneys, Henie Kruger, says he has seen Agnes in window reflections and believes her spirit is 'hanging around her old home'. Agnes is also blamed for poltergeist activity at the pub, such as knocking drinking

glasses off tables, the opening of drawers and the closing of doors, and the sound of footsteps.

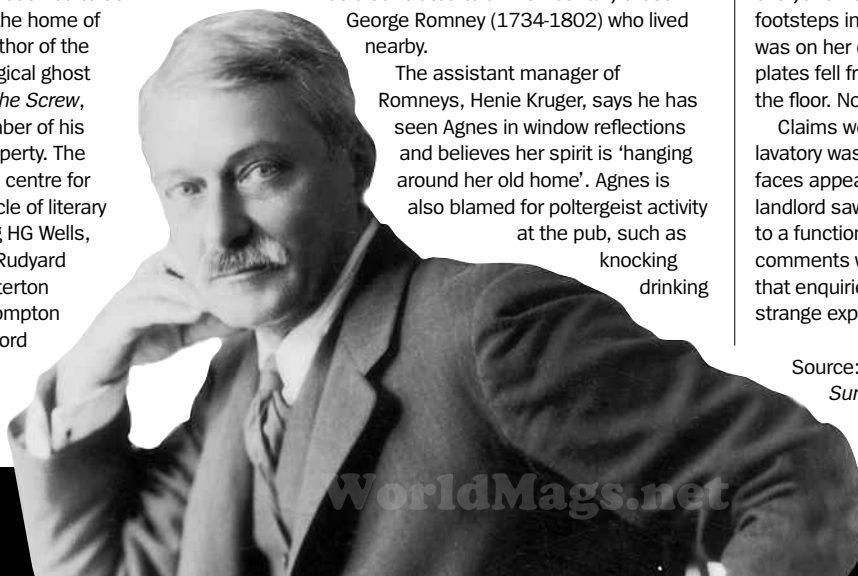
Previously the pub was known as the Kendal Arms and it styles itself as a traditional ale hostelry after a recent refurbishment. Mr Kruger has worked at the pub for 10 years and heard stories about Agnes from the beginning. He stated: "I've never been a believer in ghosts myself, but one evening when I was having my meal upstairs in the function room I saw a reflection of an old woman in the window. "It was dark outside and in the reflection she looked like a little lady, a bit like my grandma. When I looked behind me there was no one there. Agnes used to live up in the top of the building with her sister." His account in the *Gazette* was promptly picked up by the *Sun*, which ran the headline "Is Mitt Romney's great great aunt haunting a pub in Cumbria?"

Showing that some questions are best left unasked, a degree of understandable doubt has been cast upon the rather dubious identification of the phantom seen by Mr Kruger with Mitt Romney's distant relative. Martin Oromo of the Romney Society (dedicated to the 18th century painter – not the American politician) stated that Agnes's links with the Kendal pub were unclear, as was the detail of much of her life. He said: "I can't see any link between her and the house in Kendal, although George Romney's house, where he lived after retirement, is quite close on Milnthorpe Road." Indeed, it might be presumed that few, if any, images of Agnes survive and it seems improbable that any awareness of them exists in the minds of modern witnesses, at least sufficient to enable firm identification.

Talk of building alterations raises the question previously explored in *Fortran Times* whether physical disturbance of premises provokes manifestations (**FT268:30-35**). Alternatively, others may see an opportunistic link between a local ghost story and the American presidential campaign to promote trade at the pub. However, not all those making comments are so sceptical. The original report in the *Westmorland Gazette* stimulated a range of comments, with one contributor stating on line: "I used to work there from 1993-1998... Many a time everyone was downstairs and we could hear footsteps in the upstairs kitchen. One chef was on her own upstairs and a whole pile of plates fell from the top shelf and landed on the floor. Not one plate smashed or cracked."

Claims were also made that a ladies' lavatory was always strangely cold, that faces appeared at the windows, and that a landlord saw the ghost by the doors leading to a function room. Unfortunately, these comments were anonymous, but they suggest that enquiries might reveal further accounts of strange experiences.

Source: *Westmorland Gazette*, 27 Sept; *Sun*, 28 Sept 2012.



IG NOBEL AWARDS 2012

Another batch of laureates is honoured at the annual celebration of improbable research

The 22nd annual Ig Nobel awards (“for achievements that first make people laugh, then make them think”) were awarded on 20 September. As ever, the ceremony was hosted by the journal *Annals of Improbable Research* at Harvard’s Sanders Theatre. The much-coveted prizes are handed out by real Nobel laureates. As a feature in *Nature* put it, “these come with little cash but much cachet”. As usual, the boisterous audience whooped and applauded like a mob of raucous sports fans. A strict one-minute rule is enforced by an eight-year-old girl who shouts “Please stop, I’m bored!” at any award winner who talks for longer than 60 seconds while delivering an acceptance speech. Members of the audience, over 1,200 of them, are encouraged to hurl paper airplanes at the stage at various points throughout the evening. (For the 2011 awards, see FT282:22.)

The physics prize went to Patrick Warren, Raymond Goldstein, Robin Ball and Joe Keller, who came up with an equation to predict the shape of a ponytail. (Prof Keller was additionally given an Ig for work he contributed on non-drip teapots in 1999 but for which he had been wrongly overlooked at the time.) Dr Warren, a researcher for Unilever, said he was thrilled to pick up his Ig. “My field, statistical physics, is not something that many will have heard of, so I’m really pleased we’ve done something that’s caught the imagination,” he said.

The research produced what has become known as the “Ponytail Shape Equation”. This takes into account the stiffness of the hair fibres on the head, the effects of gravity and the presence of the random curliness or waviness that is ubiquitous in human hair to model how a ponytail is likely to behave. Together with a new quantity the team calls the Rapunzel Number, the equation can be used to predict the shape that hair will



“Leaning to the left makes the Eiffel Tower seem smaller”

take when it is drawn behind the head and tied together. “I’ve been working on this for a long time,” said Dr Warren. “At Unilever, as you can imagine, there is a lot of interest because we sell a lot of haircare products. But there are wider applications where you have a lot of fibres coming together, such as in fabrics. I’ve also wondered if we can contribute something to the whole area of computer animation. Hair, for example, is something that is very hard to make look natural in animated movies.”

The psychology prize went to a Dutch team – Anita Eerland, Rolf Zwaan and Tulio Guadalupe – for their study “Leaning to the Left Makes the Eiffel Tower Seem Smaller”. Two days after the ceremony, Eerland and Zwaan were to get married in the Netherlands. The peace prize went to the Russian company SKN for converting old Russian ammunition into diamonds (a

sort of modern equivalent of swords into ploughshares, only more lucrative). The acoustics prize was won by two Japanese scientists for creating the SpeechJammer – a machine that disrupts a person’s speech, by making them hear their own spoken words at a very slight delay. The echo effect is just annoying enough to get someone to sputter and stop. Actually, the device created by Kazutaka Kurihara and Koji Tsukada is meant to help public speakers by alerting them if they are speaking too quickly or have taken up more than their allotted time.

Neuroscience went to a US team for demonstrating that brain researchers, by using complicated instruments and simple statistics, can see meaningful brain activity anywhere – even in a dead salmon. The findings were published in the intriguingly named *Journal of Serendipitous and Unexpected Results*.

Johan Pettersson won the chemistry prize for solving the puzzle of why, in certain houses in the town of Anderslöv, Sweden, people’s hair turned green. (It turned out that hot water left overnight peeled copper from the pipes and water heaters, and into the water. The problems were most severe in

new houses, where pipes lacked coatings.)

The US Government General Accountability Office won the literature prize for issuing a report (GAO-12-480R) about reports about reports that recommends the preparation of a report about the report about reports about reports. (What happened to President Truman’s desktop notice, “The buck stops here”, we wonder?)

The fluid dynamics prize went to Rouslan Krechetnikov and Hans Mayer for studying the dynamics of liquid-sloshing, to learn what happens when a person walks while carrying a cup of coffee; and the anatomy prize to Frans de Waal and Jennifer Pokorny for discovering that chimpanzees can identify each other from photographs of their arses. Also in the rear-end department, a French team carried off the trophy for medicine for advising doctors who perform colonoscopies how to minimize the chance that their patients will explode. The title of their paper: “Colonic Gas Explosion During Therapeutic Colonoscopy with Electrocautery”.

For full details of winners, publications, and previous ceremonies, see the Improbable.com website. *BBC News*, *dailymail.co.uk*, 21 Sept 2012.

A^z ALIEN ZOO

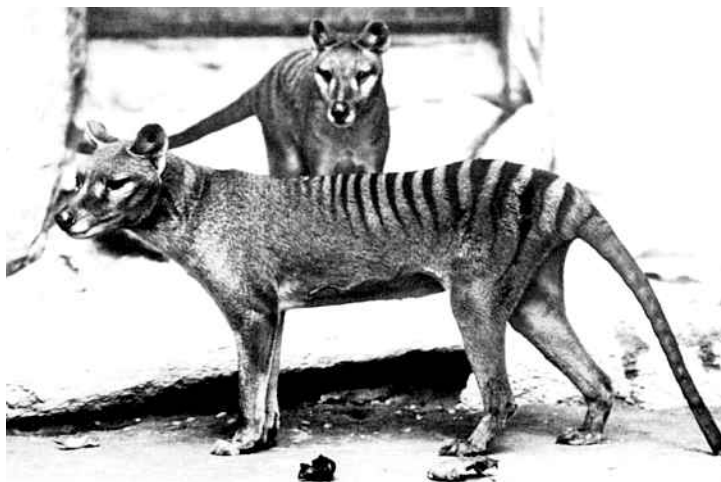
KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the crypto-zoological garden

TOUCHING THE VOID

Engineers at Cambridge University have developed a way of using lasers to remove ink from paper so it can be reused in printers and photocopiers. The research was published in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society A*. Short pulses of laser light vaporise the toner ink to delete words and images without damaging the paper. This opens up the prospect of future computer printers and photocopiers having an 'unprint' function – a sort of electronic Tipp-Ex – to allow paper to be reused. Dr Julian Allwood, who led the research team, said it could drastically reduce the number of trees cut down to produce paper, reduce the amount of chemicals used in recycling paper, and cut carbon emissions by up to 79 per cent. *Sunday Telegraph*, 20 May 2012.



Advertising agency Draftcb recently won a gold medal at the Cannes PR Lions for a concept called "El Libro Que No Puede Esperar" (The Book That Can't Wait) created for Argentine publishing house Eterna Cadencia. The idea is to publish books that go blank two months after being opened and exposed to sunlight and air, giving readers an unprecedented sense of urgency. FT doubts whether this will catch on, but envisages interesting variations, such as books that fade selectively, revealing another text in the words that remain. *Today in Tech*, 2 July 2012.



A VERY PERSONAL TASSIE QUEST

Quests seeking to prove the continuing survival of the Tasmanian wolf or thylacine (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*, above), deemed extinct since 1936, normally place a premium on scientifically verifiable evidence, but this doesn't apply to a personal search by life-long Tassie enthusiast Alan Pringle, a zookeeper at the Cotswolds Wildlife Park who has always dreamed of spying a living thylacine. Now at last he is off to Tasmania, armed with a 4WD and a tent, binoculars, several torches, and various other equipment, on the trail of this island's most famous and (if it still exists) most elusive animal. He is not publicising his precise area of search nor exactly when he will be there, though by the time that you read this he will be back in the UK. Surprisingly, he is *not* taking a camera. Here he explains why:

"When I was 10, I received the book *Vanishing Animals* by Cyril Littlewood as a birthday present (I still have it). On page 57 I encountered the enigmatic thylacine for the first time and from that moment on I became very interested in the sad story of this unique animal. I've collected anything and everything on it ever since and have long dreamed of my own expedition to look for it. I first visited Tasmania 10 years ago, but that was part of a wider Australian trip. Nevertheless, just being in the only place on Earth where there is a chance of seeing one was thrilling. Ideally I would be going out there for months, but time and funds cannot allow for that, so two weeks it is. I *truly* believe that the animal is not extinct. Much is made of the demise of Hobart Zoo's last specimen in 1936, but most scientists will agree that there is strong evidence of wild thylacines existing into the Fifties and Sixties.

"Since then there have been countless sightings, usually a fleeting glimpse on a lonely road at night, and usually from the island's north-east and north-west. OK, allowing for hoaxers and misidentifications and too much beer, if just *one* is genuine, then that means they *are* alive! I know my chances are less than slim, but I have to be able to say I at least tried once in my life. The fact I am going alone into these areas and am relying on pure luck may give me an advantage over the big expeditions that have failed so often in the past. I am also taking no cameras (which many people cannot understand), but this trip is not about proving the animal's existence to the world,

it's just about proving it to myself. If I come back having seen one, I will tell people. If I don't (as is likely), I won't lie and say that I did. Some folk get this, others don't. Lying about it would be pointless... Wish me luck!"

I certainly do, and I now look forward very much to hearing Alan's news on his return from what must be every cryptozoologist's dream expedition, seeking their all-time favourite mystery beast on a personal

one-to-one basis. *Alan Pringle, pers. comm., 28 Sept 2012.*

NEW CRYPTO MUSEUM

A new museum devoted to cryptozoology is to open in Germany. Known as the Deutsche Kryptozoologie-Museum (DKM), it is based in Wasungen, just over 30 miles (48km) from Frankfurt. Although renovations to the building housing it are currently still underway, since August 2012 a few of the rooms that have been completed so far have been made publicly accessible, in order to provide a small but tantalising snapshot of what the entire exhibition will look like when ready. www.kryptozoologie.net/beitrag/tag/museum accessed 10 Oct 2012.

FROM AN OCEAN FLOOR FAR, FAR AWAY...

A newly discovered species of deep-sea worm (below) has been formally christened Yoda! The reason for this unexpected moniker is that the species in question, a new enteropneust or acorn worm inhabiting the mid-Atlantic ridge between Iceland and the Azores at a depth of 1.5 miles (2.4km), has a pair of very large, floppy, pointed lips that reminded Dr Nick Holland, the world's foremost authority on enteropneusts, of the ears belonging to the *Star Wars* Jedi Master character Yoda. The worm's complete name is *Yoda purpurata*, describing its purple-red coloration, and this novel species, together with two closely-related ones also discovered here, was found to be sufficiently distinct from all previously recorded acorn worms to require the creation of a brand-new genus, hence *Yoda*. *Guardian*, 5 Oct 2012.



COURTESY OF DAVID SHALE



ARCHAEOLOGY

et

PAUL SIEVEKING and **PAUL DEVEREUX** report on a number of recent discoveries in Spain, France and Australia that extend the history of art by many millennia.

COURTESY OF PEDRO SAURA



SPANISH PIONEERS

Cave art in Spain – admittedly non-figurative and monochrome – is even older than the Chauvet paintings (see opposite), according to research by an international team led by Dr Alistair Pike of the University of Bristol, who studied 50 paintings in 11 caves in northern Spain. As radiocarbon dating is ruled out where there is no organic pigment, the team dated the formation of calcite flowstone growths (tiny stalactites) on the surfaces of the paintings using the radioactive decay of uranium (a technique known as uranium-series disequilibrium). This gave a minimum age for the art. Lines of red discs in El Castillo cave, Cantabria,

were found to date back to a minimum of 40,800 years BP (before present), while hand stencils made by blowing paint onto the wall were at least 37,300 years BP. A large club-shaped symbol in the famous polychrome chamber at Altamira was found to be at least 35,600 years BP.

The artists were either the first *Homo sapiens* in Europe or even, maybe, their Neanderthal predecessors – unsurprisingly, expert opinion is divided. Modern humans are thought to have arrived in Europe between 45,000 and 41,000 years ago. Dr Pike said: “We see evidence for earlier human symbolism in the form of perforated beads, engraved

egg shells and pigments in Africa 70-100,000 years ago, but it appears that the earliest cave paintings are in Europe.” In fact, they are currently the oldest reliably dated cave art in the world. *Science*, 14 June; *Guardian*, *Int. Herald Tribune*, 15 June 2012.

The uranium-series disequilibrium technique has also been used to date a reindeer engraved on the wall of Cathole Cave on the Gower coast, South Wales, discovered in September 2010. This has shown it to be at least 14,505 (\pm 560) years BP, making it the first known rock art in Britain. *Shropshire Star*, *BBC News*, 30 June 2012. **PS**

PROF BRYCE BARKER



PAINTINGS DOWN UNDER

A chance discovery has shown that rock art in Australia is among the world's oldest. Prof Bryce Barker from the University of Southern Queensland was examining a sliver of granite he had found at a remote site in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, when he noticed finely drawn charcoal lines – believed to be part of a “dynamic figure” – subsequently carbon-dated to 28,000 years BP (left). This made it more than 10,000 years older than the country's previous oldest-known art. Prof Barker's team had already found evidence that the site – a massive rock shelter named Narwala Gabarnmang, today accessible only by helicopter – was occupied 45,000 years BP. He believes that his team will find art dating back that far, which may therefore predate the Spanish cave art. Ochre sticks dating back more than 40,000 years have been found at numerous sites round Australia. The ochre was ground to powder and used for paint. *Irish Examiner*, 19 June; *Independent*, 26 June 2012. **PS**

OLDEST MASTERS

Art is a curious and complex phenomenon, pretty much unique to humanity. In collective terms, it doesn't progress from crude beginnings and then become more sophisticated, unlike with the individual, and with many other human endeavours, but that default "progression" view of art has nevertheless bedevilled archaeological thinking. It has now been hit squarely on the head by recent findings from the Chauvet Cave in southern France, where remarkable cave drawings and engravings were discovered in 1994 – accurate depictions of bears, deer, lions, rhinoceroses and horses are outlined in flowing, expert lines and look thoroughly modern. It was originally thought they dated from 12,000 to 17,000 years ago, in what is called the Magdalenian culture, when humans used stone and bone tools.

But scientists closely analysing the rock art and using radiocarbon dating of other materials in the cave suggested that the art was more likely to be between 30,000-32,000 years old. Now, support for that comes from French scientists using geomorphological and chlorine-36 dating of the surfaces of rocks involved in rockslides at the cave entrance which occurred between 29,000 and 21,000 years ago, resulting in the cave being totally sealed off from the outside world. That would mean the drawings had to have been done before then, by people in the Aurignacian culture (40,000 - 28,000 years ago).

"Remarkably agreeing with the radiocarbon dates of the human and animal occupancy, this study confirms that the Chauvet cave paintings are the oldest [figurative] and the most elaborate ever discovered, challenging our current knowledge of human cognitive evolution," says the report, published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (USA). "The method of dating [cave art] by style is no longer valid," lead author Benjamin Sadier points out. "Before we were pretty sure. And now we are sure... We can figure out the age of the cave by geological means, not archaeological ones." *PhysOrg*, 7 May 2012; *Smithsonian.com*, 16 May 2012.

Access to the cave is now restricted, but an excellent virtual tour can be had at www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arnat/chauvet/en/. Werner Herzog's *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2011) documentary shows the interior, and this film also has a 3D version, if you can find it. **PD**

CLASSICAL CORNER



FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

157. HAPPY SA(N)TURNALIA

Every December as I deprogramme the time-lock on my wallet, I curse the Romans for dreaming up our Christmas and New Year, both the pagans who started the business and the Christians who filched it.

Originally a one-day (17 December) morale-booster in the Hannibalic War (Livy, bk20 ch1 para20), the Saturnalia expanded to a week or more, and so the great British shut-down was born. Fun-loving Caligula (Suetonius, ch17) added a 'Young People's Day' – how prophetic!

Schools and businesses closed for this "best of days" (Catullus, Poem 14). The toga was swapped for holiday gear of fashionable dinner tunic and 'freedom cap' – Think stonewashed jeans and backward baseball cap. Legal restrictions were lifted to let everyone have a flutter at dice – gambling while they gambolled.

Slaves were exempt from punishment and either dined with the family – a Roman *Upstairs Downstairs* – or had their masters wait on them like officers serving their men by regimental tradition. I suppose FT is year-round egalitarian, else I might nip over to be waited on by the editor.

Even the famously stingy Cato (*On Agriculture*, ch5) allowed his staff a knees-up with extra wine. Cicero (*Letters to Atticus*, bk13 no52) describes the usually abstemious Julius Caesar noshing his way through a Saturnalian dinner with the aid of emetics – Sick Transit Gloria.

When himself a general, Cicero (*Letters to Atticus*, bk5 no20 para5) gave all the loot to his men except the prisoners-of-war which he auctioned on 19 December – the first chariot-boot sale?

One emperor swapped presents with his courtiers – but what do you give a man who has everything? Another served up goose for dinner, another modern anticipation (*Augustan History*, Hadrian, ch17 para3; Alexander Severus, ch37 para6). The latter was assassinated – fowl play that cooked his goose.

Most people joined in the holiday spirit, shouting "Io, Bona Saturnalia!" – Have A Great Time! "The whole mob lets itself go in pleasures" (Seneca, *Letters*, bk18 no3). Except for such Roman scrooges as the younger Pliny, who (*Letters*, bk2 no17 para24) stayed working in his study (no Marley's ghost or Tiny Tim in evidence). Or studious types like Aulus Gellius and friends, who (*Attic Nights*, bk18 ch2) preferred quizzes on ancient poetry – Roman version of *QI*.

Lucian (*Saturnalia*) saw the holiday as a brief glimpse of social justice for the poor,

brief but hectic respite from their usual miseries: "Drinking, dice, feasting of slaves, frenzied applause for nude singers..." – Beats Down at the Old Bull and Bush...

Martial, who wrote two volumes of couplets to accompany gifts – thus inventing Christmas Cracker mottoes and the Greetings Card verse – also intruded grim reality in a distich for a present of whips – not for S&M frolics but punishment: "Play, you slaves, but only play/I'll keep these for after the holiday." The original presents were cheaply symbolic, candles and clay dolls – try fobbing off a 21st-century child with those – purchased in seasonal street markets like modern Rome's Piazza Navona.

As the festival expanded, presents became more expensive and people harder to please. Greek orator Libanius (AD 314-393, first officially Christian generation) complained (*Oration* 9): "People suddenly go mad spending and blow what they took a year to save." Peak time for Roman shops.

Martial, though, moans about people who sent him such crappy gifts as toothpicks, beans, and olives, instead of the silver plate that he really, really, really wanted. He also chunters over rotten presents expensively sent by eight postal slaves – and so wrapping-paper costlier than its contents was born.

Yet another Martial moan concerns somebody who sent on his own present of a sausage second-hand – Early example of our 're-gifting', more whimper than banger. Still, he does itemise flashier presents, notably a dancing girl sexy enough to cause even the proverbially chaste Hippolytus to have a wank – first attested Stripogramme?

Ready for New Year? The Roman Compitalia-Kalends festivals ran 1-5 January, with more prezzies, parties and wine-louts on all-nighters in the streets (vivid account in Libanius's *Ninth Oration*, making British High Streets seem tame).

You start to wonder how the Romans found time to learn Latin and win an empire.

"All I Want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth" – Donald Yetter Gardner, 1944)



MEDICAL BAG

The two-year-old boy with a thirst for knowledge, the boyfriend with morning sickness and the woman who can see considerably more than a rainbow



ABOVE LEFT: Dr Gabriele Jordan who, after 20 years, has found a tetrachromat. ABOVE RIGHT: Sherwyn Sarabi, who at the age of two has stunned experts and doctors.

● Following a 20-year search, Dr Gabriele Jordan, a neuroscientist at Newcastle University, has found a woman who can see 99 million more colours than the average human (how this figure is arrived at is not explained). She is a doctor living in the north of England, identified only as subject cDa29, and is described as a 'tetrachromat'. Colour perception is based on ocular cells known as cones. Most people have three types of cone, making them trichromatic, while colour blind people have only two, making them dichromatic; tetrachromats, all of whom are women, have four types of cone. *Discover* magazine reported that while Dr Jordan found several tetrachromats, only cDa29 could pass her test, which included showing three coloured circles that only a fully functional tetrachromat could detect. "We now know tetrachromacy exists," said Dr Jordan. "But we don't know what allows someone to become

functionally tetrachromatic, when most four-coned women aren't. Tetrachromats may never need to draw on their full capacity. They may be trapped in a world tailored to creatures with lesser powers." *Metro, MX News (Sydney), 20 June 2012.*

● Two-year-old Sherwyn Sarabi can identify all 195 independent sovereign states on a world map, and even match them with their national flags. He can read up to 500 words, describe all major body organs and their functions, count to 200, and explain volcanoes and shooting stars. He loves to pore over his encyclopædia. He said his first words at 10 months and was playing on an iPhone as though he had "had one for years" by 18 months. His abilities have stunned experts, as well as his parents, Amanda, 35, and Daroud, 36, from Royston, South Yorkshire. "He just loves to learn," said Mrs Sarabi. "He

"He woke me at 3am telling me about Sir Isaac Newton"

recently woke me up at 3am telling me all about Sir Isaac Newton and how he discovered gravity." Instead of wanting toys, he recently asked for a telescope. His mother said: "I was trying to work out how to put it together so Sherwyn took the instructions and put it together himself." The former teacher, who has given up work to care for her construction worker husband as he recovers from a serious car accident, said they believed their son was exhibiting normal behaviour until a trip to the doctor in early 2012. "[Sherwyn] was looking at a map on the wall and started pointing

out countries he recognised," she said. "The doctor said he had never seen anything like it." He has already been offered a scholarship at a local independent school. *D.Mail, Sun, 4 Aug 2012.*

● Another gifted little boy is Ryan Kennedy, now five, who lives with his mother Lois and grandparents Ian and Anne Dickie in Blackburn, Lancashire. Ryan taught himself to read at the age of three and has passed the entrance exam for Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, but his family can't afford the fees. "They have offered him a place now," said his grandmother, "but we will have to wait till he is seven and eligible for a scholarship." *Sunday Express, 16 Sept 2012.*

● Mike Dowdall, 25, – whose girlfriend Amanda Bennett was pregnant – suffered from the rare Couvade syndrome. At first Amanda, 25, from Manchester,

thought her tattooist boyfriend was taking the mickey out of her symptoms when he complained of feeling queasy, but when he started being sick every morning, she realised he was having a phantom pregnancy. By September his symptoms included a swollen belly, hot flushes, headaches, heartburn, exhaustion, water retention and food cravings. "Now at 33 weeks I'm two stone [13kg] heavier than I used to be," he said. "Anything Amanda's body does pregnancy-wise, mine does too... I now really respect what women go through during pregnancy."

Such extreme forms of Couvade syndrome are rare, and the precise causes are unknown. Some experts claim it is psychosomatic while others blame high levels of female hormones in the body of the father-to-be. In almost all cases the symptoms disappear after the partner gives birth. Amanda's baby boy was due on 23 October. She was keen to see how far Mike's phantom pregnancy would go. "Our research suggests there is a chance he will experience contraction pains," she said. "I'd love to see that because I don't think there's a man in the world who truly understands how painful labour is." *Sun*, 4 Sept 2012.

● Opossums (a youngster is pictured below) may someday provide an antidote to nearly all forms of poison. The *Journal of Venomous Animals and Toxins* has found that the American opossum produces a protein known as Lethal Toxin-Neutralising Factor (LTNF), which seeks out otherwise lethal poisons that have entered an opossum's body and neutralises them. The protein even left the marsupials immune to poisons from snakes on other continents to which the animals had not previously been exposed. Scientists injected mice with LTNF and subjected them to venom from deadly creatures, including Thailand cobras, Australian taipans, Brazilian rattlesnakes, and scorpions and honeybees. When the venom left the mice unaffected, they were then exposed to deadly poisons including ricin and botulinum toxin. Again, the mice remained unharmed. This research was published way back in 1999, so it is curious that it is only becoming widely known now. Could LTNL benefit humans? As the journal's own abstract notes: "Thus, natural LTNF from opossum serum has potential as a universal therapy for envenomation caused by animals, plants and bacteria." *The Sideshow*, 10 July 2012.



TREE & J HENSILL / CREATIVE COMMONS

High ho – another day, another academic paper is published about conspiracy theorists. In late August, the *Daily Telegraph* ran a puff piece for a forthcoming paper which shows "that endorsement of a cluster of conspiracy theories (e.g., that the CIA killed Martin Luther King or that NASA faked the Moon landing) predicts rejection of climate science as well as the rejection of other scientific findings."¹

But this is banal, saying merely that someone who believes that the authorities are lying about one subject – Kennedy's assassination, say – may wonder what else they are lying about.

So why are academics getting agitated about conspiracy theories? Because, increasingly, conspiracy theories represent a crisis for official history and politics, as well as science. As I have argued *ad nauseam* in these columns, this is blowback from the lies told by states and governments since WWII. And in particular the academy resents the way the Internet ignores the official ranking of knowledge. Google doesn't know or care whether the author of a paper or article it lists has a PhD or whether the content is rubbish or not.

One of this particular paper's authors, Professor Stephan Lewandowsky, is quoted as saying that, unlike scientific theories, "With conspiracy theories, you start out with a theory and stick to it no matter what the evidence." But it isn't quite like that. With conspiracy theories and many of our other beliefs, it's not that we *reject* counterfactual evidence – it rarely gets to that – mostly we *avoid* evidence which is likely to make us question our beliefs; conflict makes our brains hurt. 9/11 "truthers", or Kennedy buffs like me, for example, generally do not read the arguments of those who accept the official version (any more than *they* read those who reject it).

There is some recent evidence (and theorising) that the human brain is primarily wired for belief (see **FT284:54-55; 286:42-47; 287:38-43**). Michael Shermer, author of *The Believing Brain*, summarised this thus: "We form our beliefs for a variety of subjective, personal, emotional, and psychological reasons in the context of environments created by family, friends, colleagues, culture, and society at large; after forming our beliefs we then defend, justify, and rationalise them with a host of intellectual reasons, cogent arguments, and rational explanations. Beliefs come first, explanations for beliefs follow."²

I saw an example of this just after 9/11. I was reading the conspiratorial material as it appeared on-line in the first 36 hours after the plane strikes, and two major themes appeared before there was any evidence: 1) *this is just too convenient for the Bush administration for the Al Qaeda story to be true*; and 2) *those buildings look as though they were demolished*. These two themes are still at the core of the truthers' belief system (and, yes, those buildings *do* look as though they were demolished!)

This view of the brain as primarily an organ of belief seems to have depressing implications for those who hope that humans will become more rational. In his essay on this for the American Skeptics, Gregory Lester noted "that the truly amazing part of all of this is not that so few beliefs change or that people can be so irrational, but that anyone's beliefs ever change at all."³

And yet while the Skeptics fret over conspiracy theories and pseudo-science, one recent survey suggests that belief in religion might actually be declining all over the world – just incredibly, incredibly slooowly.⁴ The sensible world that the rationalists long for might be coming, then – eventually. But, thanks to the construction of our brains, they're going to be in for a very long wait...

¹ www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/environment/climatechange/9503044/Climate-change-deniers-are-either-extreme-free-marketeers-or-conspiracy-theorists.html

² www.michaelshermer.com/the-believing-brain/

³ www.csicop.org/si/show/why_bad_beliefs_dont_die/

⁴ <http://prospect.org/article/religious-belief-declining-very-slowly-around-world>



NECROLOG

We bid farewell to an anthropologist who helped expose the Piltdown Man hoax, a Celtic scholar who played a part in the Hexham Heads saga and an esoteric historian

PHILLIP TOBIAS

Tobias participated in almost all the major digs at hominid fossil sites in southern Africa since 1945 – and was an outspoken and pioneering opponent of apartheid. In 1959 he succeeded Raymond Dart as Professor of Anatomy at Witwatersrand University, retiring in 1993. (In 1925 Dart had discovered the skull of the “Tuang child”, the first hominid to be unearthed in Africa, a species later named *Australopithecus africanus*.) Using dynamite, Tobias made further discoveries of australopithecines in the limestone caves of the Transvaal, thus putting Africa controversially at the centre of human evolution. Through his work at Sterkfontein, the richest Transvaal site, he contributed to the accumulation of evidence for the extraordinary diversity of the early phases of our evolution, culminating in the 1995 description of “Little Foot”, one of the most complete hominid fossils ever found, reckoned to be about 4.17 million years old. In 1953, Tobias was one of the scientists who exposed the Piltdown Man hoax of 1912 [FT62:24-30], showing that the notorious “missing link” was in fact an orang-utan lower jaw and a modern *Homo sapiens* cranium. Louis Leakey invited him to describe probably the most pivotal fossil discovery, that of two-million-year-old *Homo habilis* from Olduvai Gorge in Kenya in



1960. This demonstrated – or as forteans we should perhaps say “appeared to demonstrate” – that Africa was home not just to the first upright ape-men, but also to the beginnings of evolution of the features that make humans special – intelligence, technology, and culture.

Phillip Valentine Tobias, palaeoanthropologist, born Durban, South Africa 14 Oct 1925; died 7 June 2012, aged 86.

ANNE ROSS

Pagan Celtic Britain (1967) by Dr Anne Ross redefined both the academic and cultural interest in the Celtic period for both scholars and New Age adherents. It chimed with the zeitgeist, emphasising a religious cult centred on the human head. It even achieved rare cult popularity itself, and led unwittingly to much misidentification of stone heads throughout northern Britain. However, doubts have been shed upon anything ‘Celtic’ in recent years.

Her collaboration with Don Robins as a pioneer in analysing food in archaeology with a highly speculative reconstruction of the Lindow Man ‘bog burial’ in *The Life and Death of a Druid Prince* (1990) was mauled by critics. It was to Robins that she passed custodianship of the Hexham Heads, whose ancient provenance she had promoted in the face of a local man who claimed to have made them himself [see FT294:42-47 and this issue pp 44-49]. She also risked academic ostracism by publicising the presence of a werewolf, which she encountered in her bedroom during the Heads’ sojourn at her Southampton home while awaiting analysis. Indeed, she was proud of her ‘Celtic’ heritage and spoke Gaelic fluently. This helped her befriend the guardian of a Scottish site with a purported unbroken pagan connection to pre-Roman times. She also championed another example of hereditary Old Religion worship in the Peak District.

In her youth, Ross was further education officer on the Isle of Skye, living among crofting communities while honing her



ethnographical skills. It is believed she gained her PhD as a research fellow at the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh, and taught at Southampton University. She then decamped with her family to a mid-Wales village via three years in Devizes, Wiltshire, after their cat Jason was maimed by a thug’s crossbow in 1986, and took up a post at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. She lectured at the Smithsonian Institute, as well as giving talks in Austria, Denmark and Ireland. Her face became familiar to television viewers, appearing in many historical documentaries, including *The Celts*, and on *Horizon*. She also attracted controversy with ‘The Divine Hag of the Pagan Celts’ (a contribution to *The Witch Figure*, edited by V Newall). In this, she attributed Celtic status to the exhibitionist sheela-na-gig vagina church carvings, against the conventional view of their Norman origin.

Her place in the pantheon of fortean celebrities has been assured by the popularity of the Hexham Heads mythos and her family’s role. Both her children also witnessed the werewolf and it seems that as a child Ross “had experiences with supernatural wolves”. She blamed the Heads for threatening the fabric of her family and even her own life. As with an earlier head collector, Sidney Jackson, it has been speculated that Ross’s attachment to head cult artefacts brought a curse upon her.

Certainly, despite her formidable scholarship, she was not averse to parading her belief in her own psychic abilities, allegedly inherited from her Scottish mother, Elizabeth

née Reid – but she stressed that when engaged on consultancy work she was meticulously objective. At one point she was socialising in London with a member of the occult order OTO, a couple of Crowleyites and a high priestess of the local witches’ coven and her partner, a transgender male named Della. Despite her continuing high regard among pagans, she was never a practising one herself and was, in fact, a low-key Anglican.

Her first husband was James Ross. He committed suicide after she divorced him for violent abuse to both her and their daughter Berenice. The latter died in 2004 from a blood clot on her brain after a heavy fall. In 1965 Anne married Richard William Feachem, who died in 2005. Dick was much older than her, an archaeologist and cartographer at the Ordnance Survey HQ in Southampton, a city where she lectured. Their son, Richard Charles, cared for his mother when she declined into dementia. Her death was attributed to heart failure due to suspected bowel cancer, although this was not medically confirmed. She died greatly respected by pagans and the remnants of the pseudo-Celtic New Age movement, but less so by mainstream archaeologists.

Anne Grant, afterwards Ross, archaeologist, anthropologist and folklorist, born Northumberland 28 Sept 1925; died Aberystwyth, Wales 29 Aug 2012, aged 86.

Paul Screeton

NICHOLAS GOODRICK-CLARKE

Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, who has died after a brief battle with cancer, was the founding Professor of the Exeter Centre for the Study of Esotericism, the first such university department in Britain. The chair was the culmination of a lifetime’s work in setting Western occult and esoteric traditions on a solid historical footing, and at the same time infusing academic history with a sense of spiritual gnosis.

Goodrick-Clarke’s first and perhaps best-known work was *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, originally written as his PhD thesis

at Oxford University and published in book form in 1985, since when it has been revised and reprinted many times. Drawing on his pioneering archival research into the newsletters and pamphlets of early 20th-century German mystical and occult societies, *Occult Roots* presented a detailed narrative of the strands of occult, racist and pseudo-scientific Aryan thought that fed into the Nazi party, and particularly into the SS under Heinrich Himmler.

Several classic works followed, including *Black Sun* (2002), which continued the story into the post-war era, tracing the myths that accreted around Nazism and its occult dimension from pulp sources such as Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier's *The Morning of the Magicians* and neo-Nazi movements from the esoteric fascism of Miguel Serrano in Chile to the black metal underground in Scandinavia. In *Hitler's Priestess* (1998) he followed the career of Maximiani Portas, a Greek convert to Hinduism who took the name Savitri Devi and settled in India before becoming a convert to Nazism, proclaiming Hitler as an avatar of the coming age and becoming an influential conduit between Hindu nationalists and Aryan supremacists in the West.

Goodrick-Clarke wrote widely across the Western esoteric and hermetic traditions, and edited the writings of Paracelsus and Emmanuel Swedenborg. He travelled and lectured energetically, working as an independent scholar until establishing a correspondence course at Lampeter, University of Wales.

In 2005 he was offered a chair in Western Esotericism at the University of Exeter, where he developed master's and postgraduate programmes that followed the development of spiritual traditions including alchemy, kaballah, Rosicrucianism, Theosophy and ritual magic across a broad historical sweep from ancient Greece to the present. The courses appealed to practising magicians as much as historians, and fostered a lively community of students and specialists. *The Western Esoteric Traditions* (1988, revised ed, 2008) is a summary of his teaching, and a definitive guide to the subject.

Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, occult historian, born Lincoln, 15 Jan 1953; died Torquay, 29 Aug 2102, aged 59.
Mike Jay

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL



Antoni Kyriacou, 24, was found dead on 10 March by his mother, Tracey McGowan, at their home in Covent Garden, London. Beside his bed was a cup containing seeds and crushed leaves from a yew tree. At the inquest in Westminster, Ms McGowan said that friends of her son "had told her that he had expressed an interest in a practice performed in ancient times in which yew seeds were consumed when two planets were aligned." She was quoted as saying that when Venus and Jupiter come into alignment (as they had on 9 March), an unspecified "tribe of people" took these seeds "to experience the afterlife and then come back again." She said Antoni appeared serene in death and "was smiling". He was lying fully clothed and was wearing headphones that were still playing music. Cause of death was recorded as cardiac arrest by ingesting yew seeds. *Islington (London) Tribune, 8 June 2012.*

Five jealous wives "raped to death" their wealthy husband because he was showing too much attention to his sixth wife. Nigerian Uroko Onoja returned from a local bar in Ogbadibo, southern Nigeria, at 3am and bedded Odachi Onoja, the youngest of his spouses. The other five then came in armed with knives and sticks and demanded he service them too. He had sex with four of them in succession, but "stopped breathing" as the fifth was making her way to the bed. "I tried to resuscitate him," said Odachi, "but when the other wives saw what had happened, they all ran off laughing into the forest, leaving me with the corpse." Two of them were later arrested. *NY Daily News, 26 July; Asia One News (Singapore), 28 July 2012.*

A 41-year-old woman killed a shopkeeper during a row over parking – by squeezing his testicles until he keeled over. The man refused to let the woman leave her scooter in front of his store while she picked up her child from school. She called her husband and brother and in the fight that followed she grabbed the 42-year-old's scrotum until he fell to the ground in agony. He was rushed to hospital in Haikou, China, where he later died. *Sun, 29 April 2012.*

A woman ripped off her bra and used it to strangle her 65-year-old neighbour in Zakamensk, Russia, when he refused to give her money to buy alcohol, telling her she should "live in a less debauched way". The

26-year-old woman and her boyfriend, who watched the attack without intervening, fled – but she was later arrested and faced 15 years in jail. *Sun, 22 Aug 2012.*

Atasha Graham, 34, died from anaphylactic shock after clubbing until the early hours on 16 May 2011. She collapsed after stepping through the doorway of her home in Lee, southeast London, at 6.30am. Home Office pathologist Michael Heath told an inquest into her death that the latex glue used to apply her hair extensions – or the solvent for removing old ones – might have been to blame. He said there were 10 to 20 such deaths a year in the UK. "I have seen four in the last three months," he said. Normally, a reaction would occur within half an hour of applying the extensions, but he speculated that traces of glue or solvent could have seeped into her bloodstream hours later after she started perspiring on the dance floor. He ruled out reactions to food and alcohol and said there were no drugs in her system. She had been wearing hair extensions since she was 20. *D. Mail, 3 Feb 2012.*

A boy of 15 died after crashing his bicycle into a deer that jumped out in front of him. Ben Madden suffered serious head injuries in the accident on a country lane near his home in Brough, East Yorkshire. He died on 31 July 2011 after four days in a coma. It was unclear whether he was wearing a helmet or not. *D. Telegraph, 3 Aug 2011.*

An angry swan was blamed for knocking a man out of his kayak in a Chicago pond and then continuing to attack until he drowned. Anthony Hensley, 37, worked for a company that used swans and dogs to keep geese away from properties. He was in the kayak checking on the birds on 15 April 2012 when one of them attacked. By the time rescuers arrived, Hensley had drowned. Investigators believed he had gone too close to the swan or its nesting area. *Chicago Sun Times, 16 April; ABC News, 17 April 2012.*

THE FORTEAN TIMES BOOK OF STRANGE DEATHS VOL 2

ON SALE NOW FROM
WH SMITH AND AMAZON.CO.UK
TO ORDER DIRECT CALL 0844 844 0053





the UFO files

FORTEAN TIMES presents our monthly section featuring regular sighting reports, reviews of classic cases, entries on major ufological topics and hands-on advice for UFO investigators. **The UFO Files** will benefit from your input, so don't hesitate to submit your suggestions and questions.

To contact **The UFO Files**, email: nufon@btinternet.com

FLYINGSAUCERY

ANDY ROBERTS & DR DAVID CLARKE PRESENT
THEIR REGULAR SURVEY OF THE LATEST FADS AND
FLAPS FROM THE WORLD OF UFOLOGY

DAZZLING LIGHT SHOW

For the second time this year (see **FT288:28** for details of a mass sighting on 3 March), thousands of British folk were treated to a spectacular light show in the night sky. Shortly after 11 pm on Friday 21 September, calls began pouring into police and coastguard stations from people reporting a trail of brightly coloured fireballs moving slowly across the heavens. Witnesses shared descriptions and video footage on Twitter and Facebook, and sightings were reported across East Anglia, the Midlands, northeast England, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Tom Heaton, 28, was sky-watching from the Galloway Forest Park in Scotland when the lights appeared. "At first I thought a plane had crashed, but then I realised it was a meteor," he said. Others believed they were watching something moving low in the sky and one observer described the sighting as "like *Independence Day*". Peter Davenport of the US National UFO Reporting Centre logged "multiple reports" including one from Wolverhampton of fireballs that "passed rapidly across the sky, slowed to a stop and then took on the appearance of a cylindrical object, which exhibited lights at both ends [that] passed slowly down the length of the thoroughfare." The display of celestial fireworks caught astronomers by surprise. Some suspected a piece of man-made space junk but the most likely source was a large meteor burning up in the atmosphere some 80 miles (130km) high and moving at a speed estimated at least 18,000 mph (29,000km/h).

BBC News, 22 Sept; The Independent on Sunday, 23 Sept; Filer's Files #40: <http://tinyurl.com/9dtezuk>.

A POLICEMAN'S LOT

The UFO industry often tries to persuade us that police officers, as trained observers, are credible witnesses whose testimony can be relied upon. Indeed, ufologist Gary Heseltine, whose day job is detective constable with the British Transport Police, runs an online database containing hundreds of reports dating back to 1901. But should sightings made by police really be regarded as any more reliable than those from other sources? Officers are more likely to see odd things



the police's own magazine underlines the conclusion that officers of the law are no better qualified than anyone else at identifying phenomena in the sky. One night in August a young constable was alone on night shift when he spotted a "suspicious light source" hovering above the Clent Hills in Worcestershire. As the area was a known dogging hotspot (a place where people go for outdoor public sex) he contacted his sergeant, warning that he might need back-up. But 20 minutes later he called back sheepishly to reassure them everything was OK. He had discovered the source of the strange light – the Moon!

Granted, it was a rare blue moon, but the bottom line is that there really is no such thing as a 'credible witness' when it comes to UFOs and related aerial mysteries. *Police magazine, Sept 2012; D. Mail, 25 Sept; PRUFOS police database: <http://prufospolicedatabase.co.uk/1.html>*

A CUT ABOVE THE REST?

Cattle mutilations were once a major feature of ufology and it seemed at one time that no cow, sheep or, in some cases, badger, was safe from the depredations of alien meat fanciers. They are less common now but reports continue to appear in the media, most often in South America. A recent case from Argentina has once again brought this enigma to public attention. According to photographer Armando Combin, sent to the scene to document the incident, the attack left five calves dead and three injured. Investigators noted that the incisions appeared to be of a type hitherto unknown. Vet Dr Jorge Teves examined the animals and commented: "One thing I'm certain of is that the incisions made on these calves were not man-made, nor by any animal, at least not the of the kind we know. As can be seen from the photographs (above left), the incision is behind the upper part of the neck, in a circular manner." Other attacks had apparently taken place in the same general area, but animal predation was ruled out by the vet, who concluded: "We are facing something strange, but I can tell you that in all my years as a veterinarian, I've never seen anything like it." <http://tinyurl.com/97x7rg3>



in the sky because they spend so much time outdoors on patrol; but they are not astronomers and do not receive any special training to identify flying saucers. Indeed, Heseltine's database contains numerous examples of Identified Flying Objects presented as 'UFOs', including the famous occasion in 1967 when two policemen pursued the planet Venus across Dartmoor, at times reaching speeds of 90 mph (145km/h) in their panda car. A story published by

SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

Britain's best UFO known case – Rendlesham Forest, 1980 – is news again, with the report that two of the primary witnesses to this alleged landing in Suffolk are finally to tell 'their' story via ex-MoD man Nick Pope (<http://www.nickpope.net/latest-news.htm>).

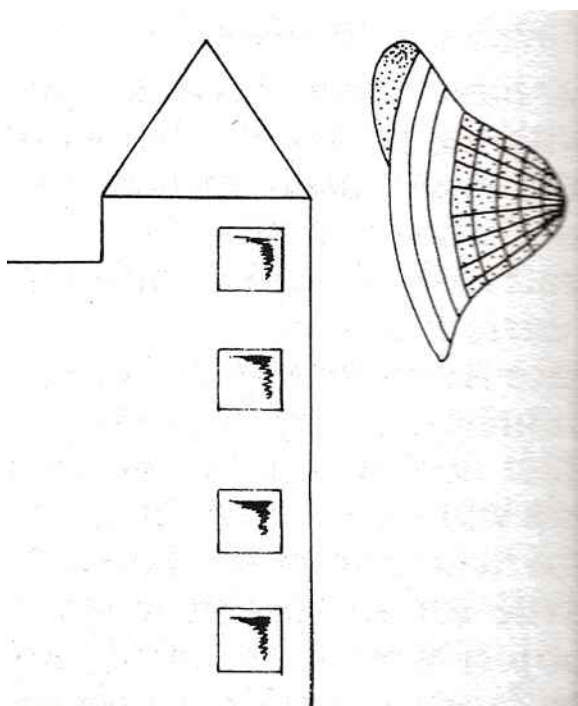
Having been involved in this affair since it started, I am often asked what I *really* think. But I prefer to focus on one largely unrecognised clue within the twisting, turning mass of evidence that suggests something important. That feature is the existence of what I call a 'Sphere of Influence' – henceforth, simply 'Sphere' for brevity.

I came across this curious aspect of close encounter cases in my early days of UFO research while living in Manchester. On the night of 8 October 1972, security guard John Byrne was patrolling the Cairo Mill, an old factory near Oldham, when he saw a UFO.

Byrne described first hearing a humming noise and looking around to see where it was coming from. Looking up, he discovered a large, disc-like object hovering alongside the mill. There was also a window out of which poured brilliant, fluorescent bluish light, a dome on the upper part and bars or a grille across. Despite this brilliant glow, the object paradoxically cast no shadow onto the ground. After watching for some minutes, Byrne then saw it 'flip' on edge and streak into the sky at fantastic speed. Yet there was no blast of air as this 'craft' sped away, nor any noise of departure. Even the humming sound did not alter pitch, unlike the Doppler shift from a speeding car moving past you.

So here was a detailed report of an extraordinary object defying the laws of physics. Oddly, the factory cat detected the UFO too. It fled the scene and hid for hours. Yet a second security guard was also just metres away. Moments later the two met, but this other officer had not experienced the UFO at all. It was as if there was a zone surrounding the phenomenon and you had to be within this 'Sphere' in order to 'see' or 'hear' the UFO.

I was soon on the lookout for more examples. In November 1975, for instance, four people walking together through Barnsley in Yorkshire described a sighting. One man was alerted by a high-pitched humming, although none of the others heard anything. Looking upward he – and then the others – saw a vivid blue fluorescent mass (as in Oldham) as it moved in a zigzag, disappeared and reappeared, shifted axis (another similarity with the Oldham case), before splitting into two balls of light that shot away at right angles and then recombined in an explosion of light. Yet, despite the above sighting being shared by four people close together and a remarkable aerial display which



LEFT: A witness sketch showing what John Byrne saw at Cairo Mill in 1972.

Here we have the two very different experiences of independent witnesses just metres apart; the one in the middle of the Sphere underwent a full-blown close encounter while the one outside saw merely an odd ball of energy.

Other abductions display these features. For example, in the 1980 abduction of Tadmorden police officer Alan Godfrey (see **FT269:44-47** and **270:46-49**) he too was struck by a beam of light, saw a UFO and the case became an abduction thanks to hypnosis developing his confused memory of 'what happened next'. But another driver on that same road at that very early hour chanced to see the UFO and reported no spaceship, no aliens and no abduction – from his more distant location he saw just a strange ball of light. Once again, it seems, you had to be inside the Sphere for the light to *become* something more extraordinary.

Why is this relevant to Rendlesham Forest? Well, here we find the same scenario. Many people at the edge of the forest saw strange things that night. Yet, predictably, these were simply balls of glowing light, sometimes with associated mist and odd electrical properties that caused effects such as interference on radio reception. Yet the airmen revealing a story of communication with a strange 'craft' were in very close proximity with this glowing energy and so *inside* the Sphere.

The airmen at Rendlesham reported physiological effects such as tingling and hair standing on end as they closed in on the light, even a sense of intelligence. Yet those outside the Sphere saw nothing so striking, provoking years of debate over whether the glow might simply be misperception of a lighthouse, some kind of atmospheric mirage or unknown UAP (Unidentified Atmospheric Phenomena), or perhaps even a plasma energy or 'super ball lightning' effect within this active UFO hot spot.

In ufology, what you believe you have experienced is not necessarily what actually happened – even if something unidentified was *really* there. Does this variation in the 'depth' of a UFO experience relative to a witness's proximity to a UFO imply that our perceptions change the closer we are to an associated energy field? My data suggest that as we enter such a 'Sphere of Influence' the way we 'experience' a 'UFO' is indeed altered. The UAP or glowing energy ball described by more distant observers is perhaps an indication that they are experiencing the phenomenon through lower levels of distortion, and that these escalate as they approach the Sphere and their exposure to its energy increases. They may even detect this rising energy as a buzzing sound, a tingling in the brain, before consciousness is progressively affected, triggering perception of a fantastic close encounter...

He discovered a large, disc-like object hovering beside the mill

lasted three minutes, nobody else in the town saw the UFO. And only one of the four heard the sound it made. It was, again, an encounter localised within the 'Sphere'. Indeed, if it had been a meteorite, for instance, hundreds would have seen it as they did across the UK on 21 September 2012.

I continued to come across further cases involving this Sphere, which turned out to be especially relevant to abductions. At Lindholmen in Sweden, a man called Harald walked across a road in response to a sound heard in his head and was struck by a blinding light. He lost consciousness and had to be taken to hospital. His body remained charged with static electricity for several days, causing tingling effects and seemingly interfering with any electrical equipment in close proximity. Moreover, he developed strange dreams and psychic experiences and – via hypnosis – soon 'recalled' an alien contact in which the beam of light was 'fired' at him by tall beings who then floated him skyward.

However, unlike most such cases – in which we have just a 'memory' formed from dreams and regression – there was another witness to the events: a second person passing by on an adjacent road who had seen what happened. They did indeed observe the unusual ball of light fall from the sky near where Harald was walking – but they did not see any aliens or the witness being floated into the air.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST

.....
FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

42 THE MYSTERIOUS STONE RAINS OF INDONESIA

THEO PAIJMANS unearths some little-known examples, both old and new, of a recurring mystery

From about 1602 to 1949, Indonesia was under colonial rule by the Netherlands. During that time, the colonial authorities inevitably came into contact with the country's fortean side. Many accounts and reports were collected, encompassing everything from the country's unique folklore to its ghosts, poltergeists and cryptozoological mysteries. One subject that recurred time and again was the riddle of the mysterious stone rains and peltings that occurred in Indonesia just as they did in other locations worldwide. Perhaps it's as a result of colonial rule, with its emphasis on bureaucracy and administration, that we have such a long list of stone rains from Indonesia. More recent reports from the country indicate that the phenomenon might not, though, be a thing of the past. Recently, a Dutch historian counted 30 accounts of stone rains between 1825 and 1903 alone.¹

Sometimes such incidents led to official inquiries, as in a case from 1831 that we learn about in an official and originally secret report sent to the Governor General in 1834. It details the results of an investigation into mysterious stone throwing at Sumedang, a city on the island of Java, which occurred there three years earlier.

The stone rains occurred at the home of one Von Kessinger, the writer of the report. He describes how he returned home one day to find a number of people surrounding his house. His wife told him that stones had fallen in the inner gallery and in the rooms of the house, and that nobody could find out where they came from. Somewhat irritated, the writer conducted his own investigation, placing himself in the middle of the inner gallery where most stones could be



Michiels remained with the little girl for hours and established that the stones “fell in ever greater numbers almost vertically around the ‘victim’ without hurting or even touching her...”

observed to fall. “I convinced myself secretly that this could not have been done by human hands, because the stones sometimes fell closely in front of my feet perpendicularly without much movement and without anyone being present in the vicinity.”

He then conducted a thorough investigation of the attic floorboards, but found them all secure and without any spaces in between. Next, he assembled all the persons living in the vicinity of his house and had them guarded by a number of policemen. He closed the doors and window shutters and went inside the house with his wife; but then, “it became even worse and stones came flying from all sides, so that I was forced to open the doors and window shutters, and with this the stone rains continued for a period of 16 days, so that on one day some thousand stones fell – among them stones weighing as much as nine pounds [4kg].”

The stone rains started at 5am and lasted to 11pm. The writer of the report made a curious remark, the possible implications of which completely eluded him: “The peculiarity that the stones most of the time fell in the vicinity of an 11-year-old girl, and even seemed to pursue her, I will not dwell upon, because this is a minor aspect of the case and it would make this account too long”.²

Fortunately, a Lieutenant-Colonel Michiels, who was passing through, interested himself enough in the case to conduct his own investigation. He locked himself up with the little girl in a room; nobody was allowed entrance or even to be in the vicinity of the room, while at the same time the house was watched by 14 guardsmen. Michiels remained with the little girl for hours, and established that the stones “fell in ever greater numbers,

almost vertically around the 'victim', without hurting her or even touching her, while it seemed that she wasn't in the least afraid or astonished by the unusual incident..." The experience made such an impression on Michiels that he did not like to talk about it in later years, although he confided the above to a General Van Swieten.³

Stone rains have continued to occur in more recent times. In February 1948, a platoon of Dutch marines, supplemented by a platoon of KNIL (Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger, or Royal Netherlands Indies Army) soldiers, some 100 men in total, experienced such an event while stationed in three houses of a sugar factory south-east of Probolingo. Over a period of two weeks – with gaps of a few days in between – stones fell on the roof and on the yard of one of the houses. It usually started at around 1pm, just as the men were standing in line for their daily meal. "The strange thing was that nobody was ever hit by a stone, notwithstanding that dozens rained down, even in their food containers. Of course, the immediate thought was that some guerrilla group was responsible. Patrols were started and ambushes were laid, without any result. After a few weeks the stone rains stopped and never occurred again during the three months that the troops were stationed there... I need to remark that the house in question was bordered on two sides by a number of tall trees, so that, speaking from a ballistic point of view, it was impossible to throw the stones over the trees to let them land precisely on the roof and in the yard... Also, the nearest place where one could get that number of stones was three kilometres away [1.9 miles]. Needless to say that that place was also patrolled by us, without any result."⁴

In 1950 the house of the Krom

family in the city of Soerabaja was the location of a severe rain of stones.⁵ In 1979, stones rained on and in the house of I Ketut Wulandha, at Ambarukmo, Cartunggal, Depok, Sleman. It all began on the evening of Monday 19 November at 7.30pm and was still going on two days later, as one Indonesian newspaper reported.⁶

What explanation for these recurring and inexplicable events do we find in Indonesian lore? In the 1979 case, some people thought that the stones were thrown by a creature named *gendroewoe*, and were aimed especially at a 14-year-old girl called Yatmi. She herself claimed that two 'bald-headed children' – perhaps the creatures that are named 'thuyuls' in Indonesian folklore – constantly pursued her. Indonesia has some hair-raising creatures and ghosts, to which our western counterparts are rather tame by comparison. There is a strange account of a Dutch woman who even claimed to have seen a *gendroewoe*, this time in the shape of a "big, black ape", rocking back and forth, clutching at some branches, high in a tree.⁷

But then there is a rare account that points to another cause for the mystery of the Indonesian stone rains. An eyewitness who was then 16 or 17 years old described the events. In 1962 or 1963, a house across the street from where the witness lived was rented to foreigners. It had a high fence made of bamboo, since the foreign woman of the family liked to stroll along in the garden in a bikini. One day, the witness writes, as evening approached, small, round stones were thrown against the fence. As this kept occurring,



LEFT: Lieutenant Colonel Andreas Victor Michiels, a witness to the stone rains and future Governor of West Sumatra.

was within a couple of feet or so of the ground. It would then suddenly become visible to our eyes, and only then."⁹

In the 1880s a certain Hassan Khan of Lucknow, described as a 'sorcerer', was able, or so it was said, to materialise bricks out of nowhere: "He seated himself and suddenly a large brick fell close to my feet. I was much startled, for there were no bricks in or about the place, and no reasonable way to account for the phenomenon. I walked out with him into my garden, when suddenly a number of bricks and clods of clay began dropping from the air all about us. I told him that, if this sort of thing were to go on, I should certainly leave him, for I had no desire to have my head broken. He laughed, looked up at the sky, made a deprecatory gesture, and said in Hindustani: 'Stop! Stop! – that's enough!' We walked on for some paces, when other bricks fell. He again made a gesture and said, 'Bas, bas! That will do', but his djinns evidently did not agree with him, for there began to fall a shower of dust or sand upon our heads. Then he seemed to get angry, and peremptorily ordered the thing to stop – and it did stop.

"The same thing occurred on another occasion when he came to my house for a medical prescription. The brick-shower ceased after he had twice commanded the invisibles to stop their nonsense. The missiles did not seem to fall according to any attractive force proceeding from his own person; sometimes they dropped very close to him, and sometimes at a distance. Their fall was sometimes vertical, sometimes diagonal, and sometimes in parabola."¹⁰

I am indebted to Dutch fortan colleague Loes Modderman for her kind assistance.

the foreigners conducted an investigation, and ended up at a graveyard at some distance from the house.

"It appeared that there was somebody who conducted some kind of ritual. The stones flew in the air from that spot, over the row of houses, over the high-rise building, over our house and the road against the fence. After some talk between our foreign neighbours and the caretaker of the burial yard, it finally stopped. What had happened? Someone in the neighbourhood, who had objected to the woman wearing a bikini, had hired someone to get rid of her with that magical stone throwing. She left in the end and the fence was torn down."⁸

Perhaps, in some cases, such vengeful human agency combines with supernatural forces, as the following two accounts might suggest.

In 1872, at a place called Komal, India, a 13- or 14-year-old girl, having accidentally offended a man, suffered a curse by which she was plagued by a demonic figure, but also by "bricks, stones and pebbles" thrown around her and the house where she lived. "We were all in fear lest they might strike and injure if not kill us, but no one was ever struck. The strangest fact was that we could not see the stone until it

NOTES

1 Coen Ackers, *Het Regent Steenen, De Spirituele Erfenis van Nederlands-Indië*, Bolongora, 2007.

2 A number of sources have published this account over the years: A letter retelling the account was later published in *The*

Theosophist of Aug 1881, a verbatim account was published in *De Echo, Weekblad voor Dames in Indië*, 6 Oct 1901, more recently in 'Stenenregen', *Voetstappen In Een Andere Wereld, Tong Tong*, 15 Feb 1974, p20.

3 'De Gendroewo in een officieel rapport',

Tong Tong, 1 July 1972, page 20.

4 'Stenen regen', *Tong Tong*, 15 Aug 1972, p20.

5 'Boekbespreking. Spoken en Spookverschijnselen', *Moesson*, 15 Sept 1984, p21.

6 'Voetstappen In Een Andere Wereld. Spoken

Woeden In Sleman', *Moesson*, 1 Feb 1980, p15. This account was translated from the Indonesian newspaper *Suara Merdeka*, 23 Nov 1979.

7 'Spoken', *Tong Tong*, 1 Nov 1977.

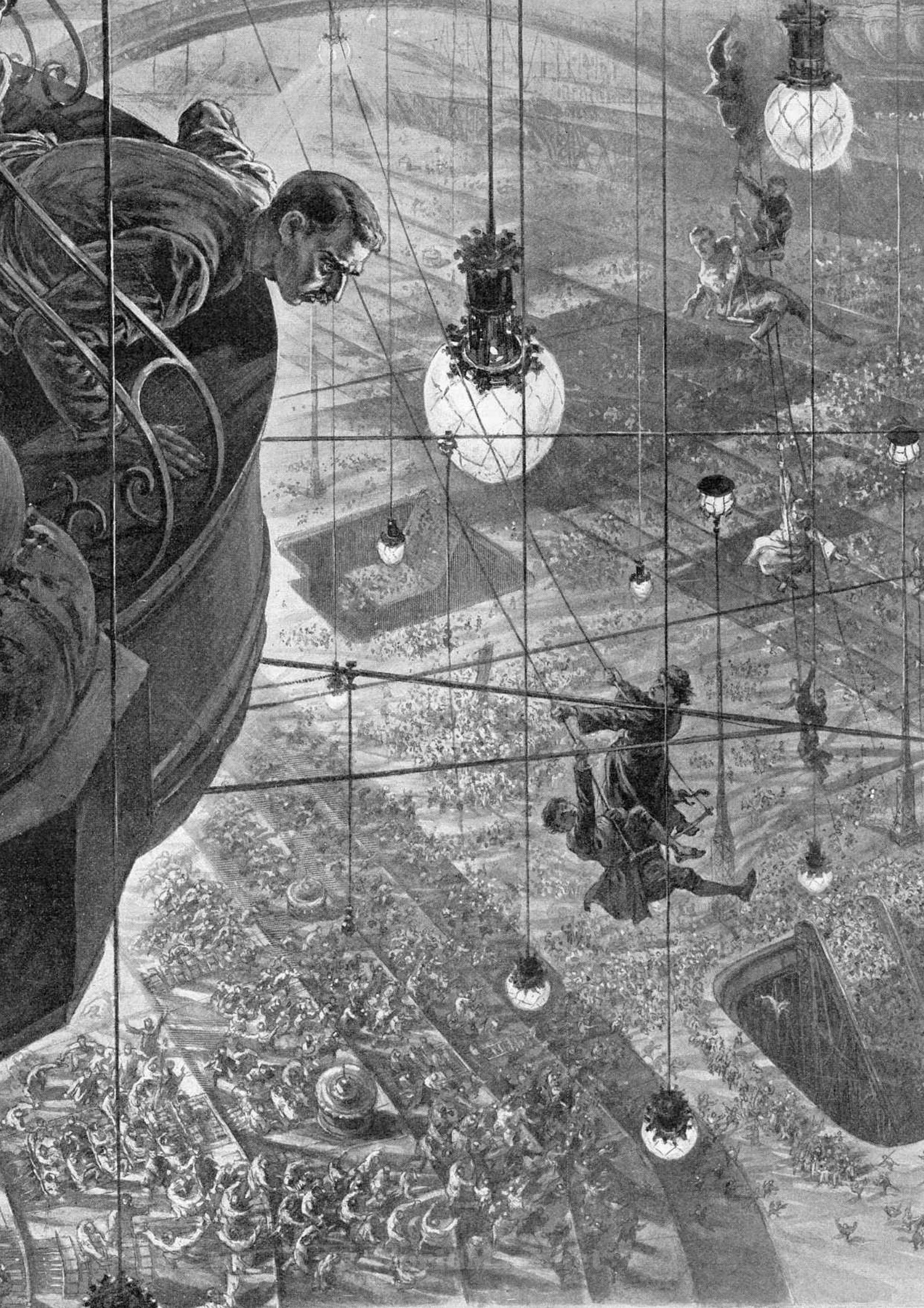
8 Denis Du Trieux, *Het Indische Tussenland*, LezersPoort Uitgevers,

2005, pages 34-35. Coen Ackers told me that Du Trieux additionally told him that this occurred in 1962 or 1963, when he was 16 or 17 years old. The stones always fell between 6 and 7pm. The stones were round, "like big marbles". E-mail and phone conversations with Coen

Ackers.

9 'Another Hindu Stone-Shower Medium', *The Theosophist*, June 1882, p232.

10 'More Anecdotes Of Hassan Khan Djinni', *The Theosophist*, May 1882.



BACK TO THE FUTURE

Steampunk is one of the most appealing, accessible and forteen genres of fantasy fiction. In the past two decades, it has become a pervasive influence on contemporary culture, making its mark on art, design, fashion, film and even music.

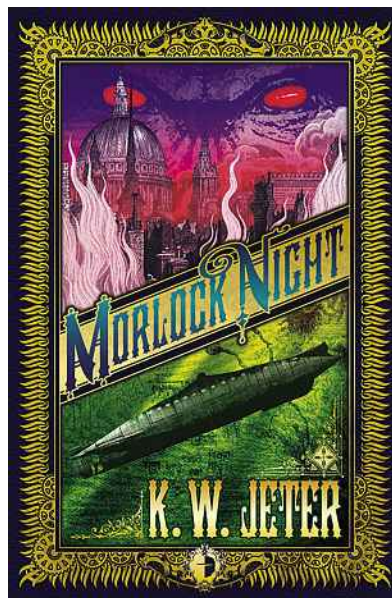
BRIAN J ROBB looks back at its history and speculates on its future

What is Steampunk, and why has it now reached a popular critical mass beyond the realms of science fiction and fantasy fandom? How has a sub-genre of science fiction literature become an all-pervasive way of life for some? Can this 'retro-futuristic' cultural movement be sustained beyond its recent breakthrough into the mainstream?

Steampunk is perhaps the most forteen sub-genre of science fiction and fantasy literature, primarily concerned with alternative history, especially an imaginary 'Victorian era' where steam power and mechanical clockwork dominates technology.

The initial literary works of Steampunk fiction chronicled a future that never happened, one in which the industrial revolution took a different direction. It featured the technology (and often attitudes) of today filtered through the past, hence the 'punk' appellation. Out of these literary beginnings has grown an entire æsthetic movement encompassing film and television, graphic novels and computer games, music and fashion.

However, it all started with the word. Steampunk was given its enduring label by author KW Jeter. He wrote to *Locus* magazine in April 1987, responding to a growing debate about which author was first to write in the field of pseudo-



SCIENTISTS IN AIRSHIPS AND STEAM-DRIVEN METAL ROBOTS

FACING PAGE: An 1899 illustration from HG Wells's *When The Sleeper Wakes*. **LEFT:** Author KW Jeter first coined the term 'Steampunk' back in 1987.

historical, often Victorian-set, science fiction. Riffing on the definition of the cutting edge 1980s cyberspace-set SF dubbed 'Cyberpunk', Jeter gave the new genre a name that stuck.

As he predicted, Victorian fantasies were to be the next big thing, with Jeter's late-1980s works, and those of his friends James P Blaylock and Tim Powers laying the groundwork for a huge explosion of the genre across virtually all media 20 years later. Collectively, these three authors were drawing on classic science fiction from the genre's earliest days – primarily the works of Jules Verne, HG Wells, Edgar Rice Burroughs and Arthur Conan Doyle – and their own immediate predecessors in the 1970s, such as Michael Moorcock and Harry Harrison, who'd tentatively begun to retroactively explore an alternative Victorian era.

There is no single definition of Steampunk that encompasses everything, but most know it when they see it. From the adventures of mad scientists travelling the world in airships, to steam-driven metal robots and pseudo-Victorian (or even Edwardian) settings, to re-imaginings (or elaborations upon) the works of Verne and Wells, Steampunk is often in the eye of the beholder. It can take the reader to worlds



DEFINING STEAMPUNK

Steampunk is a Frankenstein genre, stitched together from an innovative mix of reality and fantasy.

Those writing in the field use a variety of definitions. Stephen Hunt, author of the Jackelian series, has a personal take, while harking back to the founding fathers of Victorian science fiction: "Personally, it's always been the hard fusion between fantasy and the society of the Victorians. HG Wells and Jules Verne gave us the first science fiction and most of the elements of the aesthetic that Steampunk draws upon... airships, steam-men, clockwork time machines, tripods and ray beams."

Editor Lou Anders has a simpler definition that emphasises the Victorian setting: "Steampunk is anachronistic science fiction, chiefly but not exclusively concerned with the 19th century. There are those who believe that in order to be true Steampunk a work *must* be set and centered around Victorian England."

Mark Hodder, creator of the Burton & Swinburne series, firmly believes revolutionary political content is central: "The definition of Steampunk is rather a flexible one, due – in part – to the word 'punk' having a more politicised significance in British English than it does in American. I see the genre as a commentary on the advantages and disadvantages of Empire. It is thus extremely pertinent to current politics, where old empires are being challenged and reshaped."

For *The Great Game's* Lavie Tidhar, the definition itself is not that important any longer: "I have to confess I don't have a definition as such. I know what it used to mean, sort of..." Steampunk, it seems, is forever in the eye of the beholder.

of land leviathans and cannon-shots to the Moon, lost civilisations in a Hollow Earth, and in the wake of intrepid aeronauts. It provides alternate histories in which the British Empire never fell or the atom was never split.

The current mainstream incarnation of Steampunk was anticipated by the work of various science fiction authors in the 1970s, who instead of looking towards the future turned their SF sensibilities to the past. Fuelled by a cultural and social nostalgia for the Victorian age, an ironic or critical approach to its ideals, and an insubordinate outlook on the modern world, these authors took their cues from the 'scientific romances' of Wells and Verne. Writers such as Moorcock, Stephen Baxter and Christopher Priest reworked (and in doing so, critiqued) the ideas expressed in those ur-texts. Priest made HG Wells a character in *The Space Machine* (1976), while Baxter riffed on Wells's creations with *The Time Ships* (1995).

Jeter – who along with Blaylock and Powers was a protégé and friend of *Blade Runner* author Philip K Dick – played with Wells's toys himself in *Morlock Night* (1979), the first of the 'modern' Steampunk literary works. His story saw the Morlocks from Wells's *The Time Machine* travel back in time from their future to the sewers of 19th century London in an attempt to change the past. Powers and Blaylock contributed their own efforts in *The Anubis Gates* (1983) and *Homunculus* (1986) respectively, thereby giving the impression of a minor literary movement. Each author explored his own territory, with successive books moving slightly further away from the core notion of (in the words of Jeter's *Locus* letter) a 'gonzo-historical' recreation of the past, setting a direction for others to adopt or rebel against when crafting their own stories.

Much of the debate about what Steampunk actually is relates more to the 'punk' element than the 'steam'. The meaning of 'punk' within Steampunk is

often debated and disputed by adherents.

Much Steampunk literature and storytelling is counter-factual, occasionally counter-cultural, and often displays a resistance to the Imperialism of the Victorian age. However, there is just as much that celebrates the 'aristocracy' of the time, with much of the cosplay (essentially dressing up) of Steampunk embracing such elitist clothing styles rather than those of the 'workers' who built and operated the steam-driven machines.

Beyond the literature, Steampunk has split into a head-spinning variety of styles and expressions. Steampunk culture is distinct from Steampunk literature, derived more from a visual aesthetic rather than a literary one. Some claim that 'retrotronics' (the outfitting of modern appliances with a Steampunk aesthetic) and Steampunk fashions grew more out of DIY, craft and maker movements, perhaps offering an alternative interpretation of the 'punk' element. This argument unconsciously positions Steampunk culture as second-hand, as the visual media (in film, television, and graphic novels) was itself directly influenced by the original literature. In turn, the expanding sub-culture has inspired a new generation of Steampunk literature that takes into account these wider cultural elements that simply didn't exist when Jeter, Blaylock and Powers were pioneers.

The French translate Steampunk as 'futur à vapeur', dispensing with 'punk' altogether. The French focus on steam or 'vapeur' offers a different angle on defining Steampunk, dissociated from any overtly political overtones. The notion of Steampunk aesthetics as 'vapour' is apposite: this literary genre, cultural movement or lifestyle sub-culture can be hard to pin down. This is largely due to the fact that Steampunk is a toolbox (as Moorcock described it), with a range of tools adaptable to a range of needs. In many ways, it's a 'dressing-up' box from which participants (whether writers, film



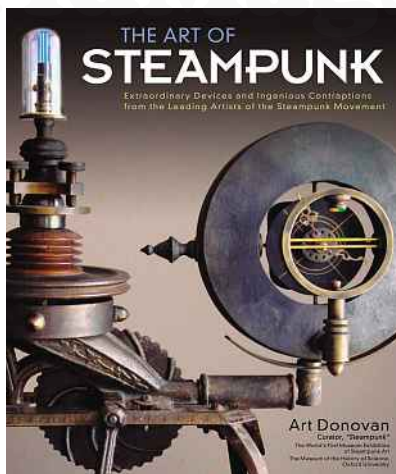
ABOVE: Paul St George with his trans-Atlantic Telectroscope installation in 2008.

directors, or cosplayers) can take what they want, and in true 'punk' style, adapt it to serve their needs.

In its journey from minor literary sub-genre to all-encompassing lifestyle and online phenomenon, Steampunk has evolved. In the opening episode of TV series *The Secret Adventures of Jules Verne*, Verne's visions of the future were forcibly ripped from his mind. Today's Steampunk practitioners have gentler ways of realising their visions of a retro-future, whether in novels, on film, in styles of dress or through creations of anachronistic technology. But where does Steampunk go from here? Can a genre based in a past that never was even have a future?

THE FUTURE OF THE PAST

In May 2008, a leading article in the *New York Times* propelled the developing Steampunk sub-culture into the mainstream. There were also several collections of short stories published, exploring the new frontiers of Steampunk fiction. These 'taster' anthologies allowed those new to the genre to dip their toes in Steampunk waters without getting scalded. Prime among them was Ann and Jeff Vandermeer's anthology *Steampunk* (2008). An introductory essay



NOW ARTISTS WERE GIVING STEAMPUNK A PHYSICAL FORM

by Jeff Nevins put the fiction in a larger context, while extracts from various works explored its roots.

It wasn't only short stories that brought a new audience to Steampunk in 2008. In May-June, the Telectroscope project linked London with New York when giant brass telescope-like art installations appeared on the banks of the Thames and the East River. Artist Paul St George claimed that a trans-Atlantic tunnel allowed communication between the two devices, allowing viewers in London to see (but not talk with) those in New York. Using modern digital technology, the artist had presented an authentic Steampunk experience to the passing public by creating an installation that appeared to be a giant telescope protruding from the Earth, connecting the two cities.

This explosion of Steampunk into the popular consciousness culminated with the Oxford Steampunk Exhibition at the Museum of the History of Science at the end of 2009. Art Donovan's display provided a new focus for the growing interest in the wider reaches of Steampunk culture, and drew a lot of mainstream media interest. Donovan noted that Steampunk was now being given "an actual physical form by artists from around the world. It's a very

STEAMPUNK IN PICTURES: GRAPHIC NOVELS & GAMES

Steampunk is largely a visual experience, making its graphic iconography a natural aesthetic for visual media including comics, graphic novels, computer and videogames.

One of the earliest Steampunk comics (pre-dating the genre classification) was 1976's *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright* by writer/artist Bryan Talbot. This epic – called "the single most influential graphic novel to have come out of Britain to date" by comics author Warren Ellis – was not completed until 1989 and spawned a sequel, *Heart of Empire*, in 1999. A series of striking monochrome images, including steam-driven tanks, flying machines, and the continuation of the never-ending 'Britannic Empire', provided the background for Talbot's inventive tales.

Perhaps the most authentic and most popular Steampunk work in the world of comic books is writer Alan Moore and artist Kevin O'Neil's ongoing series *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, which certainly captured the

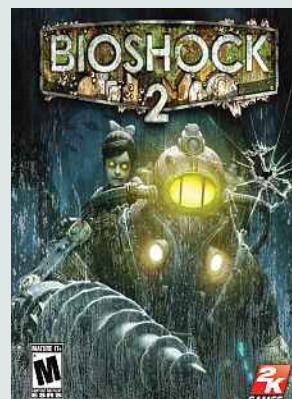


mainstream imagination. From 1999, Moore chronicled the offbeat adventures of a group of Victorian characters brought together by the British government to battle threats to Crown and country. Moore repurposed some of the Victorian era's finest fictional personalities, including Mina Murray (better known as Mina Harker, from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*), H Rider Haggard's adventurer Allan Quatermain, Verne's Captain Nemo, Wells's 'invisible man' Griffin, and Stevenson's Jekyll and Hyde. They worked for Campion Bond



(an invented ancestor of Ian Fleming's James Bond) and the mystery figure of 'M' (revealed as Sherlock Holmes's nemesis, Professor Moriarty).

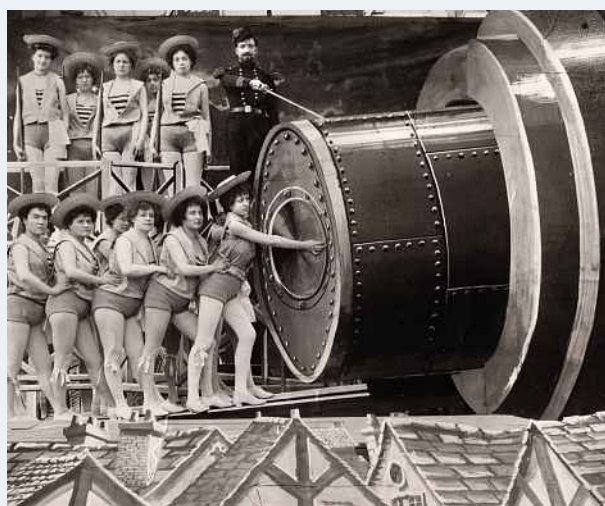
In constructing his vast imaginary world, Moore did more than just spoof the Victorian *Boy's Own* adventure fiction that much of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* drew upon. He used the Victorian period, as does the best Steampunk, as a framing device for a series of very contemporary takes on some classic characters. Moore was not just poking fun at



the pulp fiction originals, but was celebrating that style of storytelling from a late-20th century perspective.

Inevitably, role-playing game and videogame creators found the settings and iconography of Steampunk as irresistible as graphic artists. From board games and role-playing games (RPGs) such as *Space: 1889*, via early computer game hits like *MYST* and *Final Fantasy VII* to later, more sophisticated and immersive creations such as the *BioShock* series, Steampunk has infused much modern videogaming.

NITRATE NIGHTMARES AND SELENIUM DREAMS: STEAMPUNK IN FILM & TELEVISION



Ever since the magically animated fantasies of French filmmaker Georges Méliès, many of whose early silent shorts adapted ideas from Jules Verne, to Méliès's appearance as a character in the Oscar-winning *Hugo* (2011), film and television have pioneered the Steampunk style.

The Méliès short films *A Trip to the Moon*, *The Impossible Voyage* and *The Conquest of the South Pole* would inspire Karel Zeman's *The Fabulous Worlds of Jules Verne* (1958), a Czech film that combined woodcut-style backgrounds with live action and animation. In bringing Verne's Steampunk visions to cinematic life, Zeman created a film that was not only about the Victorian period, but appeared to have come from it.

Fantastical vehicles feature



heavily in Steampunk cinema, from the famous *Nautilus* in the quintessential 1954 screen version of Verne's classic *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, via *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying*

Machines (1965) and even *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (1968) to the likes of the airship movies *Zeppelin* (1971), *The Island at the Top of the World* (1974) and *The Hindenberg* (1975). Such fantastical vehicles

continue to feature in *The Golden Compass* (2007) and the recent Steampunk reinvention of *The Three Musketeers* (2011).

The city backdrops for Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) and Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985) both show distinct Steampunk affinities. These movies project the cities that grew during the Industrial Revolution forward into the future or sideways into fantasy. In film, the Steampunk city came into its own with Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), and would thrive through the retro-futuristic, steam-wreathed dystopic cities of *Alphaville* (1965) and *The City of Lost Children* (1995), the fantasy-noir *Dark City* (1998) and *City of Ember* (2008), and the Japanese animations of *Akira* (1988) and *Ghost in the Shell* (1995).

Although Steampunk is now a feature of science fiction and fantasy shows such as *Warehouse 13*, *Eureka* and *Sanctuary*, television was slower to adopt the aesthetic, although there are a few early, rarely seen examples. The 1960s produced *The Wild Wild West* (1965-69), which mixed Steampunk gadgets and James Bond Spy-fi with a Civil War setting. The 1980s saw *Q.E.D.* (1982) pit an inventor played by Sam Waterston against a Machiavellian Julian Glover. The 1990s unleashed Bruce Campbell in the light-hearted *The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr.* (1993-94), while MacGyver himself – Richard Dean Anderson – experienced Steampunk adventure in the 'weird West' of 1995's short-lived *Legend*. The new century saw Verne and Wells, the inspirations of almost all Steampunk, enjoy new adventures in the mini-series *The Secret Adventures of Jules Verne* (2000) and *The Infinite Worlds of HG Wells* (2001). Even the venerable British Doctor Who has got in on the Steampunk act in the likes of *The Talons of Weng-Chiang* (1977) and *The Pyramids of Mars* (1975) in the classic series, through to the new TARDIS console rooms (from the 1996 Paul McGann TV movie onwards) and the giant steam-powered CyberKing of the 2008 Christmas special, *The Next Doctor*.

STEAMPUNK CINEMA: Edgar Rice Burroughs (top) was a major influence on Steampunk, as was Jules Verne (centre right), whose work inspired Georges Méliès (centre left) who turns up as a character in *Hugo* (left).

STEAMPUNK INDUSTRY: INSPIRED CREATORS & FANDOM

Although it had its origins in literature and its most populist explorations have been in film and television, there is much more to Steampunk – a whole creative lifestyle and sub-culture modelled after the Steampunk aesthetic that's exploded from a cult into the mainstream. From costumers and role-players, to gadget-builders, retro-fitters and musicians, as well as the burgeoning world of online communities, Steampunk has become a thriving creative force.

Costuming – or cosplay – grew out of science fiction fandom, but has been given a wide appeal through the lens of Steampunk. The combination of historically-sourced styles of dress (largely, though not exclusively, Victorian) with fantasy has given Steampunk costuming an extra edge. An assortment of corsets, parasols, fancy hats, and goggles, with additional mechanical contrivances like cogs or pistons, make-up the Steampunk style. While full-on Steampunk-inspired outfits can be elaborate, it has become possible to buy into the style cheaply by subtly adapting existing clothing or making small additions to shop-bought items.

Modding – meaning 'to modify' – began primarily with 'case modding' by early adopters within the Steampunk online



STEAMPUNK SCULPTURE: Steampunk-inspired artists have created all kinds of objects, including biomechanical bugs and retro-futuristic weaponry.

communities, who customised their laptops, computers and iPods by adapting various Steampunk-influenced designs seen in comic books or movies, adding cogs, wheels, steam pipes, radio valves and typewriter keys. The aim was to disguise modern technology, to make it appear as though it had emerged from an alternative Victorian past. Two real-world practitioners of Steampunk modding largely responsible for the explosion of the style from the mid-2000s were Jake von Slatt's Steampunk Workshop and Datamancer's Technical Art and Steampunk Creations, the first examples many fans saw of the Steampunk style being applied to real-world objects.

One of the indicators that Steampunk has grown into a mainstream youth sub-culture, rather than simply an offshoot of a literary genre, is the growth of Steampunk music. There can be few literary genres that can boast their own soundtracks. Perhaps the two best-known Steampunk bands are Abney Park (named after a cemetery in Stoke Newington, London) and Vernian Process, whose name harks back to Jules Verne. 2012 saw American band Rush release their 19th studio album, a Steampunk-themed anthology entitled *Clockwork Angels*.

broad-based discipline, from literature to sculpture."

A special Steampunk issue of *Locus* from September 2010 and *Vintage Tomorrows* – a full-length independent documentary for Intel's The Tomorrow Project series of conversations about the future – opened up a wider view of the Steampunk sub-culture. One popular conclusion saw Steampunk as a reaction against the rapid development of technology and social change. It was seen as a way of humanising technology, making it understandable again to the average person.

Steampunk fiction has continued to diversify, moving further away from the original works by Jeter-Blaylock-Powers. Steampunk novels delved into comic fiction in Gail Carringer's *Parasol Protectorate* series, and outright spoof in some of Robert Rankin's work (most fully in *The Japanese Devil Fish Girl and Other Unnatural Attractions*, 2010). The new century saw a group of authors emerge working almost exclusively in the Steampunk arena. Mark Hodder's trilogy – *The Strange Affair of Spring-Heeled Jack* (2010), *The Curious Case of the Clockwork Man* (2011), and *Expedition to the Mountains of the Moon* (2012) – chronicled the investigations of Burton & Swinburne.

Hodder admitted to being influenced by Moorcock (especially his politically-engaged take on the genre) in the same way that Steampunk's originators were influenced by Verne and Wells. Even mainstream thrillers, such as *Angelmaker* (2012) by Nick Harkaway, adopted Steampunk stylings.

These authors all produced their work when Steampunk was already a widely accepted sub-culture within the mainstream. The literature that now laid claim to the label was not produced in a vacuum, like that of the 1980s and 1990s. Now these novels could draw on the wider aspects of the sub-culture that had evolved over the better part of two decades. Many non-fiction books appeared about the 'art' of Steampunk, or as guides on how to 'mod' your own items 'the Steampunk way'. Many of these works – fiction and non-fiction alike – did not engage with the political elements that had once been at the roots of Steampunk, with several almost uncritically reviving and revering ideas of Empire. This was the almost inevitable mainstreaming of Steampunk as another form of innocent escapism. Perhaps the next batch of Steampunk novels will feature more punk and less steam...

THE FUTURE IS STEAM

What's the future for Steampunk? Given that the genre consists of cultural products the majority of which only ever achieve degrees of fidelity to the original definitions, it is remarkable how little those definitions have evolved. Jeter's letter to *Locus* in the late-1980s offered "gonzo historical Victorian fantasies" as a description of what he, Blaylock and Powers were up to.

The Steampunk sub-culture has successfully breached the mainstream, so the phrase can only be a catch-all term; it will be abused, misapplied and misappropriated as it is discovered (and re-discovered) by new audiences and participants. The BrassGoggles forum put together a collectively produced definition of Steampunk in 2011 that hits enough bases for it to stand as a core description for a while yet: "Steampunk is a social, practical and creative movement which draws inspiration from Victorian and pre-war history in an anachronistic mix of science fiction and modern values (and is enjoyed by people who like gin, tea and cake!)."

One danger Steampunk faces is that the definition becomes so rigid (for instance that it must be related to Victorian London)



ABNEY PARK



COURTESY OF THOMAS WILLEFORD

ABOVE: Steampunk has spawned its own soundtrack from bands like Abney Park (left) and inspired a community of costume makers to create retro-futuristic outfits (right).

that it excludes much interesting and varied work or so loose (anything with cogs attached) that it becomes meaningless. Steampunk might become ossified, trapped within restrictive 'Victorian values', comparing badly with wider science fiction that is generally inclusive, always changing, always featuring something new, or at least reinvented. Cyberpunk lost its edge through dilution and the failure of the surrounding sub-culture to catch on outside of SF fandom; it was ultimately re-absorbed as just one more 'flavour'. Steampunk has at least escaped that fate, so far, by producing a thriving, ever-expanding sub-culture that in many ways is now almost totally divorced from the literature that spawned it.

Perhaps the final word should go to one of the genre's founding fathers, James P Blaylock: "I hope that Steampunk hangs around for a time. It produces art of great beauty and imagination, which I don't see happening with other literary sub genres. Hard to imagine vampire romances, for example, or zombie fiction, having that kind of multifarious effect on the arts."

Once everything is covered in cogs, what then? Steampunk works well when it is constantly recombining the elements that go to make it up: no one work contains it all, yet all have degrees of 'Steampunkiness', whether that's airship pirates, mad-scientists, steam and soot, time-travel, or gas-lamp fantasies, Martian invasions and art deco ray-guns.

Some think Steampunk's DIY ethos has equipped them to survive the 'inevitable forthcoming apocalypse' and accompanying collapse of civilisation. While such thinking

might be confined to a few fringe elements, there is a 'green' political side to Steampunk, and it is an area ripe for growth. Eco-Steampunk (or 'Greenpunk'?) might be a new iteration of the sub-culture, as the core DIY aesthetic is keenly concerned with re-using found objects. There have been serious arguments put forward for airships as a future mode of green transport, assuming new technologies can overcome the dangers faced by the *R-101* and *Hindenburg*.

There is continued space for growth and innovation in Steampunk from a more international perspective. Author Cherie Priest has noted that Steampunk is not a binary choice (that a work of art either 'is' or 'is not' Steampunk) but is instead a 'spectrum'. In one way this means it can be all things to all people: Steampunk is inclusive, a creative playground, within which inspired individuals and their work can flourish. It's an alternative art movement, increasingly taken seriously by the mainstream.

Far from viewing the world through rose-tinted goggles, Steampunk practitioners (whether writers, artists, movie-makers, or 'modders') have tackled deep political and philosophical issues with a playful and whimsical touch. Steampunk developed from alt-history literature to an ever-evolving art style and a distinctive social grouping. Whatever happens next, it will change again.

There are degrees of Steampunk, ranging from the severest, restrictive definition to the broadest use of the term for any

kind of retro-futurism. The latter all-encompassing approach – descriptive rather than prescriptive – encourages diverse and inclusive discussion. Wider definitions will allow Steampunk to live on, evolve, and be used in ways that suit each individual 'user', while still communicating a core notion of what Steampunk actually means.

It may re-imagine the past, but the future belongs to Steampunk... **F**

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



BRIAN J ROBB is the *New York Times* and *Sunday Times* bestselling biographer of Leonardo DiCaprio, Johnny Depp and Brad Pitt. He has also written books on silent

cinema, the films of Philip K Dick, Wes Craven and Laurel and Hardy, as well as television series *Doctor Who* and *Star Trek*. He is co-editor of the Sci-Fi Bulletin website and lives in Edinburgh.



Steampunk: Victorian Visionaries, Scientific Romances and Fantastic Fictions by Brian J Robb is available from Aurum Press priced £25.00.

The PRANA Talisman

ADVERTISEMENT

How does **PRANA** work? The way traditional magic has always worked!...

With very little time and effort, the Prana Talisman can provide its owner with the inner power to achieve any positive goals that they wish, however ambitious! Centuries of wisdom, knowledge and practice have percolated down from the scholars and mystics of the ancient world, and now their legacy can be revealed and offered to you, in the form of the Prana.

Here is the most important aspect; the Prana will remain nothing more than an interesting metal pendant displaying some curious and mysterious-looking symbols before it is first activated, or consecrated. However, once properly and personally consecrated, it will be transformed into a real and powerful talisman dedicated to helping you to achieve the success you desire. Just as with a brand new car, which would first need fueling

and then purposefully driving in the right direction before it could actually deliver anyone to their destination, the Prana disc will need charging with both your own positive mental energy as well as the earth's natural forces, and then focusing on your personal goals before it can succeed in achieving them. Consecrating your Prana takes only a few, but

priceless minutes. Anything can be achieved with enough self belief and determination, providing it is humanly possible. Prana is the truly magic catalyst that will assist you in achieving your most ambitious goals and desires. Once your Prana has been effectively consecrated, or 'tuned', in just the way a TV antenna collects and converts invisible

signals and then broadcasts them as a clear picture, it will collect and magnify all the available natural, positive forces along with your own psychic energies, and then channel them straight towards your personal goals.

You will feel physically and mentally stronger and energised. Confidence will brim within you and you will feel a potent force rise inside, discovering new personal powers and becoming sharp and decisive. You will intuitively recognise opportunities as they appear when previously they went-by undetected; you will feel 'lucky'!

Instead of stuff just happening around you, you will be able to make things happen!

Each PRANA talisman comes with its own 12 page booklet of easy instructions and is supplied in a purple satin pouch.

... I think that Prana talisman is working as I have been creating and drawing nonstop and with new confidence. . .

unbelievable. . .

Ms DN, London

Hey... I just wanted to let you know that the talisman is amazing! Thank you! Since I had it, work has been coming in, I feel great and everything seems to be getting better!

Ms NJ, Leicester

For further information visit-

www.PranaTalisman.com

www.PranaTalisman.com



The PRANA Talisman

Turn your Dreams into Reality
with the Power of Magic & your Mind

PRANA is a real and very powerful, authentic magical talisman of ancient origin, to help you achieve all your goals.

Supplied in its own individual pouch & complete with a simple 12 page booklet of instructions and background information.

PRANA Original - £9.99 each
PRANA Deluxe Crystallised Edition - £14.99 each

(Shipping per order: £2.50 UK Mainland; £3.50 Europe; £5.00 R.O.W.) For full details and secure online ordering visit our website.

www.PranaTalisman.com



The deluxe
crystallised
PRANA

The original
PRANA

PRANA - the Talisman of the Elements, the Breath of Life and the Four Archangels.



The Fortean Times

Random Dictionary of the Damned

compiled by the Hierophant's Apprentice

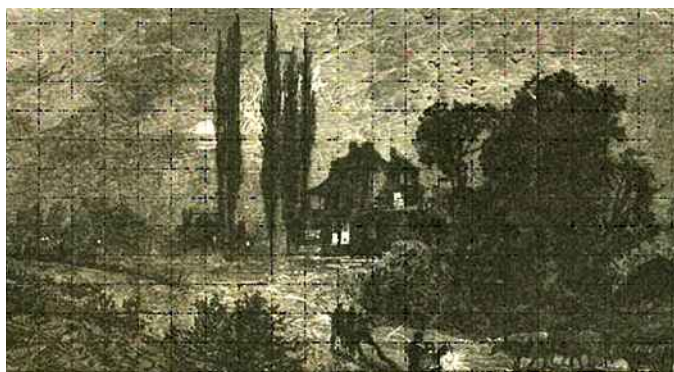


No 48: WEIRD WEATHER

It is scarcely a secret that Charles Fort was fascinated by off-the-wall meteorological phenomena and 'contradictory' weather conditions (such as hail falling from a clear blue sky). The index to the Dover edition of the *Complete Books* (DCB)¹ lists 55 references to the *Monthly Weather Review*, and they hardly exhausted the Great Bookworm's interest. Which was, as often as not, fired by a near-obsessive desire to catalogue the weird stuff that had been reported falling to Earth in storms, and sometimes out of them: Bob Rickard's index to X's edition of *The Book of the Damned* (John Brown, 1995) alone has 110 items listed under 'Falls', ranging from ants, beef and butter through lizards, mud and mussels to worms. We covered such peculiarities and others like them in our entry No 9, 'Fafrotskies'. Here we'll concentrate on more specifically meteorological oddities – which is to say, stuff that even conventional weathermen might admit lay outside their explanatory powers. We'll also visit one or two of the stranger explanations for (apparently) odd weather in various places. For this, readers of a nervous disposition may wish to dust off their tinfoil hats, or a convenient bulb of garlic.

CONVENTIONALLY STRANGE

Some kinds of bizarre weather are less inexplicable than unexpected. The classic example in the UK is the hurricane of 15-16 October 1987, whose impending arrival was famously – airily, even – dismissed by the nation's leading TV forecaster,



his everlasting subsequent embarrassment giving new meaning to the phrase 'fall of Fish'. Someone somewhere probably believes it was all the work of ET aliens intent on destroying evidence of their visit to Rendlesham Forest (the place looked like a patch of the Somme *circa* 1915 for a while afterward), but we won't go there. Whereas a truly horrible unforeseen strangeness descended on northern

Europe, the north-eastern United States and south-eastern Canada in the spring of 1816, the 'year without summer'. China and South-East Asia suffered too.

Spring in temperate American climes generally enjoys temperatures of around 70°F (21°C), but May 1816 saw crops dying of frost in New England, and in June Quebec had 12in (30cm) of snow, followed by sub-zero temperatures so cold that wildfowl froze to death. The frosts – which persisted all summer – were preceded by a curious, persistent "dry" fog, so thick that it reddened the Sun and made it possible to discern sunspots. Over the summer in New England, temperatures fluctuated violently. Dan Suri writes:

June began promising enough and on the 5th temperatures in New England climbed into the low 30s Celsius, for example Salem, Mass., reached 32C. However, during the afternoon of the 5th thunderly showers broke out over New England and later in the day a cold front swept across the region, dragging cold air down from Canada in its wake. The next day, the



JIM GRAY / GETTY IMAGES

FACING PAGE: New England's 'Dark Day of 1780. ABOVE: Surveying the damage in the aftermath of the English hurricane of October 1987.

6th, was much colder. Some places were as much as 27 degrees colder than the day before... and in parts of Vermont and in Boston temperatures reached little more than 7C... Conditions turned colder during the next 2 or 3 days and precipitation that fell became increasingly wintry in nature. On the 7th snow fell over the northern highlands of New England, snow flurries fell in parts of Connecticut and Massachusetts... in Salem and Boston for example, and away from the coast, snow fell in June as far south as 42 degrees north... Near Danville, Vermont snowdrifts just over 50cms [20in] high were reported... Contemporary reports spoke of prolonged falls of snow, snow settling and lying for a couple of days and very windy weather at times...

In Vermont, the Brattleborough *Reporter* noted: "In the town of Cabot [the snow] was 18 inches [45cm] deep on the 8th of June." There were few warm nights (vital for growing corn) in July, and drought added to farmers' troubles. Then there was a series of killing frosts in September. The cumulative effect on agriculture, and hence the food supply, was disastrous. Wildlife was no less stricken.

If anything, Europe fared worse. England's average temperature for the whole of 1816 was 13.37°C (56°F), the third coldest on record – the other two lows occurred during the Little Ice Age – and summer temperatures were often below freezing. In Ireland from May until September, it rained on 142 of 153 days, grim even by that island's notoriously damp standards (see Flann O'Brien, *The Poor Mouth*), wrecking cereal and potato crops and bringing famine to the north and southwest. Wales, to which Ireland exports its surplus rain, saw starving families take to the roads, begging for food. In mainland Europe there were widespread riots in protest against steep food prices. In France and Switzerland, some 200,000 people died of starvation and an ensuing typhus epidemic. The sickness crept through Europe's malnourished population, finally subsiding in 1819. Meanwhile in northern China, rice, water buffalo, and trees died from cold; floods, caused by a delayed, then abnormally heavy monsoon season, destroyed most of what crops were left. In India, flooding from the delayed, torrential monsoon helped to spread an outbreak of cholera that in time reached as far as Moscow. The following winter too was unusually cold. In New York City, temperatures sank as low as -32°C (-26°F).²

SO MANY REASONS WHY

One can imagine what Fort might have made of this, mocking every 'professional' opinion as to the causes of "eighteen hundred and froze to death", as that ghastly year became known. It's something of a surprise that it passed unmentioned among his ruminations. Perhaps he would have been pleased to record that the Ukraine enjoyed an unusually hot summer, as did Scotland and the Shetlands. Fort's smug resistance to conventional explanations sometimes went beyond eccentric whimsy and ventured into the realm of the tedious. Perhaps this is the price, or mark, of genius. At the time it happened, the aberration that was the summer of 1816 was inexplicable (except to the usual Bible-thumpers denouncing global wickedness, fornication, ladies' fashions, &c.), partly because news travelled very slowly then and partly because meteorologists didn't know what they do now.

The catastrophic chill of 1816 was actually a brief sample of what a 'nuclear winter' would be like. In the previous few years an unusually large number of volcanoes had been active, dumping dust into the upper atmosphere and causing a mild cooling and some breathtaking sunsets. On 10-11 April 1815, the Tambora volcano (on Sumbabwa, in modern southern Indonesia) erupted spectacularly, in what's reckoned the most violent such event in 10,000 years. About 15,000 local people died instantly, and 65,000 more followed, suffering from disease and starvation. The amount of dust, rock and aerosols flung into the stratosphere has been put as high as 200 megatonnes. The volcano itself was reduced by half as its upper slopes sheared off. Prevailing winds brought the dust into the northwestern hemisphere the following year, screening it from the Sun. Other factors such as low sunspot activity and inertial solar motion may have contributed to the overall effect. As so often, given enough information, today's semi-magical event becomes tomorrow's mostly-explicable anomaly; an anomaly nonetheless.

More tentatively 'explained' is New England's 'Dark Day' of 19 May 1780, when the sky went pretty much black from about 10am over an area stretching from Portland, Maine, to New Jersey, although not as far west as Pennsylvania. New England historian John Horrigan³ reports that:

By 10 AM... [Samuel Savage of Weston] noted that "Fowles [had] retired to their Roosts, or collected in clusters". Crickets began chirping and cows returned to their stalls. The preternatural night had fallen. All over

New England, every farmer, schoolboy, fisherman, maiden, cordwainer, blacksmith, clergyman and laborer gawked upward for the missing sun and gasped at the remarkable and sudden elimination of light. A deep shadow had fallen and "every thing bore the appearance and gloom of night." The noonday meal was served by candlelight and a single candle "cast a shade so well defined... that profiles were taken with as much ease as they could have been in the night." The newspaper known as the *Massachusetts Spy* reported that one "could scarcely see to read common print, [and] it was the judgment of many that at about 12 o'clock... the day light was not greater, if so great, as that of bright moon-light" and "no object was discernable but by the help of some artificial light." Samuel Savage... could not even read his watch, even as he stood by his window. His neighbor was forced to quit spreading manure in his field as he was longer "able to discern the difference between the ground and the Dung." Savage noted that "the birds of the Night were abroad and by their melancholy notes added to the Solemnity of the Scene."

Severe religionists feared the words of *Revelation* were being made manifest – "The sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became as blood. The stars of the sky fell to the earth, like a fig tree dropping its unripe figs when it is shaken by a great wind." (6:12-13) – and that Judgment was at hand. Such a reaction, if widespread, was not universal. Jolly Jack Tar, at least, remained as jolly as ever:

Lawyer William Pynchon of Salem, Massachusetts recorded that most people scurried about with "melancholy and fear", everyone that is, except for the sailors who "went hallooing and frolicking throughout the streets", were "reproved in vain" and shouted lewd remarks at women as they drunkenly tried to entice them to remove their clothing.

Horrigan rehearses various explanations for the bizarre blackness, and settles on the crucial contribution of massive forest fires along the shores of Lake Champlain, Vermont. But that wasn't the whole of the story:

In Boston, on the afternoon of May 18th, the day prior to the Dark Day, a breeze sprang up and blew the gathering smoke pall to the south. The following day, the wind changed direction several times before blowing from the east in an onshore breeze that caused a heavy fog. That fog then collided with a front composed of this "timber smog" and rain clouds swept up from the southwest. Could this have been a rare occlusion of a major warm front that was woven with thick smoke moving from the southwest, and then saturated and stalled by cooler moist salt

FOG COVERS MEUSE VALLEY IN BELGIUM

**Sixty-Four Deaths in Three Days Have Terrified Countryside—
Peasants Die in Sudden and Horrible Asphyxiation—
Many Hold Buried Stores of German War Gas
Responsible—Doctors Skeptical**

Brussels, Belgium, Dec. 5—(AP)—A mysterious poison fog, blanketing the Meuse valley in Belgium for three days, has terrified the countryside and already caused 64 deaths.

Many domestic animals also have fallen as victims.

For 72 hours an extremely heavy fog has hung over the valley, and peasants groping through the dense clouds of mist have died in sudden and horrible asphyxiation.

At first it was believed the casualties were caused by the choking mists aggravating respiratory complaints, but the magnitude of the epidemic has brought fears that poison gas is responsible.

It is known that great quantities of German war material are buried around Liege, where most of the fatalities have occurred, and some believe this to be responsible. Others lay the trouble to some noxious by-product of an industrial works which has mixed with the fog and drifted slowly down the air currents of the valley. Still others believe a secret store of poison gas has been loosed in some manner.

Authorities are working frantically to determine the exact cause, performing post mortem examinations and otherwise investigating.

Panic Reigns

Panic has seized the villagers of the region, who have fled to the shelter of their houses and in many cases

Continued on Page 6, Column 6

LEFT AND BELOW: Headlines report the poisonous fog that swept through the Meuse Valley, Belgium, in 1930.

air moving from the east? Could it have caused a thick cloud layer to stall over New England for several hours and consequently blot out the sun? On the Dark Day, considerable rain fell in Maine as thunderstorms with vivid lightning moved across southern New Hampshire. Only a little rain fell on Massachusetts. Indeed this was quite a peculiar meteorological anomaly. Perhaps the center of the low pressure system deteriorated and its strength decreased and therefore its prowess was protracted as the breadth of the cell increased, which is

a common attribute of extra-tropical cyclones and some Nor'easters. Perhaps the thicker smoke pall served as a stalling barrier to the winds that blew in from the east.

YOU DON'T NEED A WEATHERMAN...

...to know which way the wind blows, averred the prophet Dylan, in one of his many intuitions of the obvious.⁴ And, even if you did, there's not much you can do to change it, or any other bit of the weather. Weather *per se*, and climate behind it, are fundamentally chaotic systems. The complex maths of chaos provide descriptions of *past* events and their contexts but don't allow much, if anything, by way of prediction. Which makes weather forecasting beyond a few days into the future a tricky business at best, and a failure to comprehend such complexity contributes somewhat to the fatuity of the climate change/global warming 'debate'-cum-Mexican standoff-cum-doctrinal war.⁵ On the other hand, chaotic systems provide for the *possibility* that the kinds of weird weather Charles Fort noted are less 'damned' as data go than Fort or anyone else might have thought, and for explanation don't call for an escalation of hypotheses to

the heights of a Super-Sargasso Sea – if, indeed, and unlike Fort, naturalistic explanations are what you're after.

A poisonous fog appearing in Belgium on 5 December 1930 and bumping off 77 men and women may well have had some connection with military experiments, as Fort hints (*Lo! DCB* p574) – though he implicitly dismisses industrial pollution, for which Belgium has since become famous. So long after the event, a sleuthing historian might be able to get nearer the truth. And perhaps, somewhere, some credentialled scientist might calculate how it was that certain thunderstorms caused the appearance (prudently Fort doesn't quite say 'falls') four times of snakes in the streets of Hawthorne, Massachusetts (*Lo! DCB* p593). Or of grain, "during a thunderstorm – at Rajkit, India... reported by Col. Sykes, of the British Association" (*Book of the Damned*, DCB

p66). Or the falls of warm water in the form of large raindrops at Geneva in 1837, 1838 and 1842 (*New Lands*, DCB, p410). Meteorologists and experts in fluid dynamics (perhaps of the order of the late Sir Stanley Hooker) might like to investigate the curious behaviour of hail that Fort recounts (*Lo! DCB* p568):

POISONOUS FOG.

PANIC IN BELGIUM.

64 PERSONS DIE.

Cattle and Sheep Suffer.

Mysterious Disease Puzzles Doctors

BRUSSELS, Dec. 6.

People are terror-stricken and doctors are puzzled by the deadly effect of a poisonous fog which enveloped portion of the Meuse Valley, in Belgium, on Friday and Saturday. So far 64 persons have died and hundreds of cattle and sheep have perished. The afflicted district formerly was one of the healthiest in Belgium.

...a fall of hailstones, at Nottingham, England, May 29, 1859. Though the objects were more than an inch [2.5cm] across, they fell slowly. In September, 1873, near Clermont-Ferrand, France... hailstones, measuring from an inch to an inch and a half [2.5–3.8cm] across, fell. They were under an unknown influence. Notwithstanding their size, they fell so slowly they did no damage. Some fell upon roofs, and rebounded, and... then fell faster than fell those that came down in an unbroken fall.

Fort gives references for these and three other instances of this phenomenon and speculates that it's due to "a counter-gravitational influence". These were large hailstones, but one wonders what shape they were: if we knew that, an aerodynamicist might have something to work with.

Of one of the odder aspects of weird weather Fort makes little more than passing mention. In *The Book of the Damned* (DCB p282) he tantalisingly refers to accounts of luminous rain and snow in Hartwig's *Aerial World* but doesn't pause to tell us more. X's online edition does, however, in a useful annotation:⁶

George Ludwig Hartwig, *Aerial World*. London: (1824), 1875 ed., 319-20. As follows:

"The rare phenomena of luminous rain, hail, or snow, also belong to the domain of electricity. In 1761 the famous Swedish naturalist Bergmann wrote to the Royal Society of London that he had twice witnessed a rain, unattended by thunder, which emitted sparks as it fell, so that the ground seemed covered with glowing waves.

"Luminous snow was seen by Forskall on April 22, 1759, at Upsala, and the same phenomenon occurred on Loch Aire, in Argyleshire, in March 1823; and on January 25, 1822, near Freiberg, in Saxony, when it was witnessed in two different places."

William Corliss tracked down other instances of luminous precipitation, noting there were "Several good reports by experienced observers from the older literature; but, strangely, none from the past 60 years." One such was that of the French Abbé Bertholon who, on 28 October 1772, "was travelling between Brignai and Lyons, in the midst of a heavy storm, [and] was surprised at seeing the raindrops and hail-stones emitting jets of light as they fell upon the metallic parts of his horse's trappings."⁷ In general, Corliss says, reports are of "Raindrops, hailstones, and sleet particles that emit flashes of light and crackling sounds when they hit terrestrial surfaces. Some reports refer to electrical 'sparks,' others to phosphorescent 'flashes'..." He suggests three possible mechanisms – "Electrical discharges when electrically charged precipitation hits terrestrial objects; triboluminescence (as in crushing sugar cubes); sonoluminescence, in which trapped

gasses become incandescent due to sudden, violent pressure changes" – although these don't explain how the precipitation becomes electrically charged in the first place. Nor does it give us much of a handle on that elusive luminous snow. We can postulate that it's picked up some traces of phosphorus from somewhere, but – ? Informed and erudite readers are invited to contribute to the sum of human knowledge.

IT'S US OR THEM

And finally. We can hardly leave the matter of weird weather without a brief glance at those who know the answers to everything about apparent meteorological anomalies and, most important, who's behind them. There is a whole class of these polymaths who consider that any quirk in average weather conditions is the fiendish work of HAARP – the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program, whose goal in its own words "is to further advance our knowledge of the physical and electrical properties of the Earth's ionosphere which can affect our military and civilian communication and navigation systems."⁸ Not much chance of fiddling with the weather there, but such innocence doesn't wash for those who already know that behind HAARP (and every other mildly incomprehensible Western science project) lie the architects of the New World Order and the all-powerful Illuminati, who are busy bending the secret discoveries of Saint Nikola Tesla to their own perverse ends. The connection between Tesla and HAARP isn't clear to anyone else. Inevitably the conspiracy theories have become entangled in prophecies of the imminent Apocalypse of December 2012, and equally inevitably unconventional weather is seen by 2012 end-of-the-worlders as an early sign of 'cleansing' upheavals and tempests to come. Selective vision, sometimes more simply described as solipsism, seems peculiarly attracted to weather events: we remember that at the 1969 Woodstock festival the claim was made that the downpour that made it so special was the work of the CIA (or the USAF, or someone) seeding the clouds. Presumably 'they' have been honing their skills ever since at Glastonbury, lo! these many years.

On the other hand, a visit to the Virgin Mary's End-Times Prophecies website offers an *exposé* by celebrated eccentric Lt Col Thomas Bearden of the wicked and amazing things the Soviet Union got up to, manipulating the weather – with the aid of Tesla's secret discoveries, of course.⁹ Apparently written no later than the mid 1980s, Bearden's essay predates the emergence of the current, more right-wing demons of conspiracy lore, and so doesn't help us decide whether Vladimir Putin is still pulling meteorological strings, or if he's handed all that wherewithal over to the Illuminati. Such is life. If it's dry, work in the fields. If it's wet, work indoors. Let us know if the snow's luminous, though.

The Hierophant's Apprentice thanks Jerome Clark and Bob Rickard for material assistance in obtaining source material for this entry.

NOTES

1 References to this edition are preceded by Fort's original book title and labelled DCB.

2 www.dandantheweatherman.com/Bereklauf/yeamosummer.html; www.mitosyfraudes.org/Calen/Year1816.html; www.celebrateboston.com/disasters/year-without-a-summer.htm.

3 See: www.johnhorrigan.com/darkday.html.

4 'Subterranean Homesick Blues', *Bringing It All Back Home*, 1965.

5 In *Science Frontiers* #90 (Nov-Dec 1993), legendary anomalist William Corliss (commenting on Sommerer, John C., and

Ott, Edward; "A Physical System with Qualitatively Uncertain Dynamics," *Nature*, 365:138, 1993, and Peterson, I.; "Finding Riddles of Physical Uncertainty," *Science News*, 144:180, 1993) lamented: "It was discouraging enough to learn that many natural systems, from simple pendulums to our weather, are basically chaotic; that is, tiny changes in the initial conditions upon which predictions are based can lead to highly unpredictable outcomes. Chaotic systems are usually qualitatively predictable but not quantitatively predictable. We have no choice but to live with this chaos; it seems that that's the way the cosmos is constructed! However, it now seems that the situation is even worse than chaotic! Some systems,

perhaps most systems, are also indeterminate, meaning that we cannot predict their qualitative behavior either. A simple example is the water swirling down the bathtub drain. This is not only chaotic but it has two qualitative final states: clockwise and counterclockwise. Regardless of which hemisphere you are in, you can change the direction of swirl with negligible effort. Each of the two final states of motion is still quantitatively unpredictable. Systems that are more complex will possess many different final states, all chaotic. Can nature really be fundamentally chaotic as well as qualitatively uncertain? ...A heck of a way to construct a universe!" See: www.science-frontiers.com/sf090/sf090g13.htm.

6 www.resologist.net/damn23.htm#N_2_

7 William Corliss (ed), *Tornados, Dark Days, Anomalous Precipitation, and Related Weather Phenomena. A Catalog of Geophysical Anomalies*. Sourcebook Project 1983, p107. The dearth of reports he notes thus dates from the early 1920s. Charles Frederick Holder, in *Living Lights: A popular account of phosphorescent animals and vegetables* (Sampson Low, 1887; available online at www.archive.org/stream/livinglightspopu00holdrich/livinglightspopu00holdrich_djvu.txt), gives various instances of luminous snow and hail in Chapter XIX 'Luminous Showers' (p144ff) including the Abbé Bertholon's. But most of his accounts are

of fiery precipitations, and his remarks on fallen snow—"Not only are the summits of Alpine peaks and the glaciers luminous, but the valleys of Piedmont, Valais, and others have been seen to emit from their covering of snow a soft blue light of singular beauty. So intense is this light about the cap of Mount Blanc, it has been photographed."—seem related more to human perception than anything strictly anomalous.

8 See: www.haarp.alaska.edu/haarp/faq.html

9 See: www.tldm.org/News8/SovietElectromagneticAttacksOnUnitedStates.htm The site's home page is worth a visit if only for the link titled "St Francis of Assisi was not a garden gnome". How else would we have known?



IN SEARCH OF THE HEXHAM HEADS

PART TWO

In 1977, Paul Screeton went to the Northumberland town of Hexham to investigate a bizarre case involving stone heads, Celtic scholarship, poltergeist phenomena and werewolves. 40 years on, **STUART FERROL** joined Paul as he retraced his steps. Could the mystery at last be solved?

At the Fortean Times UnConvention 2011, during the Q&A following a talk by Dr David Clarke and Andy Roberts on 'Cursed Stone Heads', filmmaker Graham Williamson and I – in attendance to work on Graham's Hexham Heads documentary – came across Lyndsay Allason-Jones, an ex-employee of Newcastle's Museum of Antiquities, in the audience. It turned out that Lyndsay had access to the Museum's file on the Hexham Heads case, which I'd been trying to get hold of for months without success. She had only become curator after the Heads' time there, but had dealt with many requests for the file and had kept a copy – we are forever in her debt for passing further copies on to us.

The correspondence in the file means we now know that, after relocation from Dr Anne Ross's house, supposedly back to Southampton University, the bothersome heads were again sent on their travels in early 1974. This time, they ended up closer to home – at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. One Dr A Robson of the Department of Geology carried out further tests on the heads, coming to



LEFT: Lyndsay Allason-Jones, keeper of the Hexham Heads file. **OPPOSITE:** The head made by Colin Robson and given to Paul Screeton in 1977.

THE HEADS WERE MADE FROM CEMENT AND QUARTZ

the conclusion that they were unlike any natural sandstone and were made from an artificial cement containing mixed-in quartz grains which could have come from builder's sand – something Des Craigie had access to at the time he claimed to have made the Hexham Heads.

In 1975, Dr D J Smith of Newcastle's Museum of Antiquities wrote to the Robson family to update them on the test results and to inform them that the Heads

were being returned to them. Two months later, Mrs Jenny Robson replied, saying she would be happy to accept them. Although a further letter from Dr Smith in April stated the parcel was dropped off at Hexham's Council Offices to be collected, there is no proof that the Hexham Heads ever found their way back to Rede Avenue. Their current whereabouts, nearly 40 years later, remain a mystery.

Adding to that mystery are the reports that Don Robins – co-author with Dr Anne Ross of the book *Life And Death Of A Druid Prince: The Story of Lindow Man* – was presented with the Hexham Heads from a drawer in Southampton University by Frank Hodson. Robins, it is also alleged, passed them onto British astrologer and parapsychologist Frank W Hyde, who wanted to carry out some esoteric and not entirely scientific tests of his own on the already extensively examined heads. Perhaps in response to the threat of further prodding and poking, the Hexham Heads engineered the serious car crash that Hyde supposedly suffered subsequently. This is all conjecture, of course, and impossible to prove. As far as we know, the last *official* resting place of the Heads are those Council Offices in Hexham.

We thought for a moment that we'd found the heads when carrying out a reconstruction of their original discovery in the garden of number 3 Rede Avenue for Graham's film. Digging a small hole at which the child actors would then take up their own digging for camera, roughly where the Heads had been found back in 1971, we hit something solid. It turned out to be the kind of concrete bulb that roots one of those old-fashioned clothesline poles found in many a British back garden.

BOTH PICS: PAUL SCRETON

HEXHAM ORIGINS

Nothing much is known of the original peoples of Hexham before Wilfrid, Bishop of York, was gifted the “Hagustald’s” lands by Queen Etheldreda in 674 to build his monastery. Hagustald possibly originates from the Old High German term that denoted a younger son who took land outside the main settlement. We know nothing of the identity of this “son”, but we do know that he couldn’t be Etheldreda’s offspring as she famously kept a vow of perpetual virginity. Whoever he was, he may have had a home here before Wilfrid. The “ham” that became appended to the name and stayed there until the modern town’s name evolved came from the Old English for home, or Scottish “hame”. A Roman origin for the town was aspired to, particularly in the Victorian age, suggested by the amount of reused Roman stone incorporated in the Saxon Crypt, the only complete structure remaining from Wilfrid’s first church. But the major Roman fort and town of Corstopitum is three miles east and lesser sites on Hadrian’s Wall lie within easy reach. The distinct lack of Roman roads leading to and from Hexham make its Roman occupation, beyond a small temporary fort or stopping off point, unlikely.

The origin of the stones seemed to be proven when, in 1887, three Roman stones, including the top half of a considerable altar, were discovered in the bed of the River Tyne at a site known to be an ancient ford. The surfaces were so worn by the water that it was supposed that they had lain there since the building of the first church and had arrived there after a cart carrying stones from another Roman site had overturned.

Hexham is situated just downstream from the confluence of the North and South Tyne, a significant place for the ancients, and it’s therefore no surprise that a Romano-British stone was found at “Waters Meet” in the 19th century. Carved into its face is the representation of a Heracles-type warrior. It now rests in the nearby village of Acomb and has earned the name of “Acomb Man”. Neolithic stones have been found on the outskirts of Hexham, one from a supposed barrow on the golf course that overlooks the meeting of the Tynes. On the northern edge of the same course there is a small tumulus colloquially called “Priest’s Seat”.

Bronze Age burials have been found, earthworks (probably an Iron Age Fort) have been recorded on top of a hill in the west of the town, and a single Iron Age coin was found in a central location. Hardly conclusive proof of a large settlement, but some evidence that people lived in small, scattered developments within the area of the modern town. The name of The Sele – now a public open space – has been tentatively connected to the Anglo-Saxon word for ‘hall’, suggesting that a large building stood there either before or coinciding with the arrival of Wilfrid. Perhaps this was the “ham” of the Hagustald itself?

But it was over two feet down, along with a plastic ‘Number 3’ plaque. Were these signs of some kind of ritual burial, or merely a poor attempt at a time capsule? Paul asked Colin Robson, the original discoverer of the Hexham Heads, about these strange finds; but Colin could provide no answers, and was as bewildered as we were.

When they finally met again after all those years, Paul also asked Colin, now a man in his 50s with his own family, about the head he himself had made and eventually given to Paul on the day he found him in his back garden in 1977. Intriguingly, Colin had made this head for a school art project literally weeks before finding the ‘real’ Hexham Heads buried in the garden. Although not exactly matching the style of the others, Colin’s head is certainly similar (and has been frequently mistaken for one of them, largely thanks to the photograph of Paul’s hands holding a Craigie replica and Colin’s clay head which has often been wrongly captioned as Paul holding the Hexham Heads).

I felt that ascertaining the truth about exactly when Colin’s head was made was one of the most crucial facts to establish. Why had he been inspired to make a sculpted head of this kind so close to finding the two other little stone heads? Was it the same inspiration that made Des Craigie craft the original three for his daughter? Was Colin somehow impelled to make the Hexham Heads a trio again after the loss of the third Craigie head? Colin couldn’t answer these questions, and perhaps no one else can confirm categorically that he made the head before finding the Hexham Heads.

THE LEGEND AND THE CAVE

We thought we were nearing the end of our quest when Paul received an email from an acquaintance whose partner is a psychic. She had provided Paul with directions to a spot where she believed the Hexham Heads had either originated or ended up. With my local knowledge I worked out – although the measurements were slightly off – that she was pointing

us toward Queen Margaret’s Cave by the side of the Dipton River and just south of Hexham’s racecourse. Legend has it that in 1464, Queen Margaret of Anjou, escaping the decisive Battle of Hexham in the War of the Roses, made her way with her son into the forest south of Hexham. There she encountered a gang of robbers – but instead of threatening the young Queen, the robbers’ leader fell to his knees before her and vowed to keep her safe. He took her and her son to their hideout, a well-concealed but comfortable cave within the forest at the banks of the stream.

One problem with this tale is that Queen Margaret of Anjou wasn’t even in the country at the time of the Battle of Hexham. It’s a romantic tale, probably conjured up at some point to give the cave – which does still exist – a colourful pedigree. Or does it hearken back to something real but now forgotten, something that has been embroidered and transformed into this tale of a Queen, her son and a robber-turned-protector to keep it topical? The origins and use of the cave are unknown, but it is certainly ancient. At one point, somebody built a crude pillar of rough masonry in the centre and there may have been a partition there dividing it in two. The dimensions are giving by Agnes Strickland in *Lives of the Queens of England, Vol III* (Philidelphia, Lee and Blanchard, 1841) as “34 by 14ft [10x4m]; the height will barely allow a full-grown person to stand upright.”

Could this cave have been a shrine? Did the figures of the maiden, son and protector possess a religious significance? Three people – three original heads, one supposed to be female. Did Des Craigie know of the legend? Most old Hexhamites did. Were the Hexham Heads a tribute to this mysterious threesome, or was a long-forgotten belief working its way back to the surface of the town’s collective unconscious, first through Des Craigie and then later through Colin Robson? When the heads were discovered and the spotlight of attention shone back on them by the locals, and later by the press, did



ABOVE: Reunited after 35 years, investigator Paul Screeton interviews the grown-up Colin Robson.

GRAHAM WILLIAMSON



STUART FERROL

ABOVE: The three heads made by Des Craigie reunited for the first time since 1977, with Colin Robson's head on the far right. BELOW: A carved bagpiper from the 15th century Prior Leschman's Chantry Chapel in Hexham Abbey, one of a number of grotesque figures to be found there.

this give them enough power to unleash their animalistic protector, the were-creature seen and felt by the Dodd and Ross families?

One perplexing question is why the Heads only brought about such visitations on two occasions, and never when in the possession of the other experts, professors and interested parties who handled them at various times. There have been dubious additions over the years to keep "the curse of the Hexham Heads" alive, but none can be verified. They appeared to be very quiet when kept for all those years at both Southampton University and The Museum of Antiquities and University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Could the heritage of the holders of the Heads provide the answer?

Richard Feachem, Dr Anne Ross's husband, never saw the apparition, even though everyone else in the house did. Feachem claimed to come from Norman stock; Ross is obviously a Scottish name. Dodd and Robson are traditional Northumberland or Borders surnames and Craigie is Scottish and intriguingly means "rocky place", as in craggy. Perhaps a willingness to believe that the tiny stone carvings could be conduits for the mystical was all that was needed.

HEXHAM'S OTHER HEADS

Then there is the preponderance of carved stone heads around Hexham (see sidebar 'Other Heads Around Hexham'), which may have come

WHY HAD COLIN BEEN INSPIRED TO MAKE A HEAD OF HIS OWN?



From Prior Leschman's Tomb
Hexham Abbey A.D. 1491

from a single source – the ancient church built by St Wilfrid (c633-c709). This was a grand structure inspired by the basilicas Wilfrid had seen during his travels on the continent and his time in Rome. Wilfrid's biographer, Stephen, wrote in wonder of "the manifold buildings... supported by various columns and many side aisles, and adorned with walls of notable length and height... nor have we heard of any other house on this side of the Alps built on such a scale". The church was reportedly filled to bursting point with carved flourishes.

This fine church was almost completely destroyed by the double whammy of assaults by the Danes and the Scots. Its nave survived for a short while, as the present east end and transepts of Hexham Abbey were built against it, finally being replaced sometime around the 13th century. Where did all the splendid carvings go? As is usual in times when materials were hard to come by, builders were keen to re-use whatever they could. A suitable fate, perhaps, for an unprecedented building made in part from stones taken from nearby Roman settlements. There was also a small church adjoining the cathedral dedicated to St Mary and possibly a further small church or chapel to St Peter. Are these lost buildings the originators of the stone gargoyles or grotesques incongruously embedded in the back of the nearby pub The Heart Of All England, and the large stone head that has sat outside Hexham Hospital for many a year?

OTHER HEADS AROUND **HEXHAM**



GARGOYLE AT BACK OF
HEART OF ALL ENGLAND PUB



WINGED SKULL IN ABBEY



HEAD CARVED INTO STATUE HOLDER
ON ALTAR TOMB, ABBEY



HEAD OUTSIDE HEXHAM HOSPITAL



HEAD OUTSIDE UNIONIST CLUB



STONE HEAD IN ABBEY, POSSIBLE PARTNER OF HEAD OUTSIDE HOSPITAL



KNEELING MAN'S HEAD IN ABBEY: COMPARE COLIN ROBSON HEAD

Whether or not this is the case, it suggests that a tradition of carved heads took root in the area. The 15th century Prior Leschman's Chantry Chapel within the Abbey boasts some fine woodwork made outside the area, but more importantly includes some fascinating and unusual stone carvings reportedly carried out by a local man. These include such weird and wonderful characters as a gluttonous ape, a fox preaching to geese (a popular satire on the priesthood), a bagpiper, a grotesque figure with four heads called "nobody" and seemingly giving birth to one of its heads and, harking back (or forward) to Barry Scott's tall tale of the slaughterhouse robber, a sheep-stealer. Book-ending the base of the shrine is a hideous kneeling figure whose anguished face somewhat resembles Colin Robson's clay head. Could he have seen this horrendous visage in one of his trips to the Abbey? After all, it was the first place he thought of taking the Hexham Heads after he'd found them.

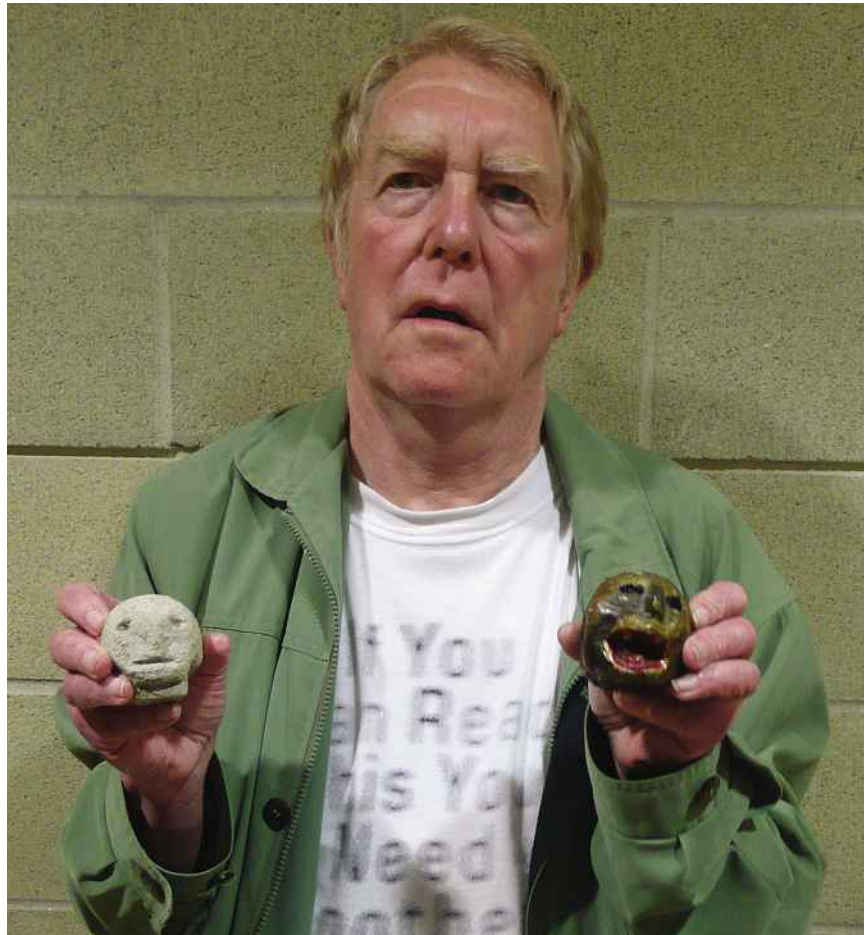
Something I've wondered about, after examining these ecclesiastical carved heads, is why everyone seemed to assume that the Hexham Heads were of pagan heritage? They could have sat quite comfortably next to the almost satanic looking carvings on Leschman's Chapel, or possibly in one of the lesser churches now long since lost. Would the builders of Wilfrid's edifices have had access to the modern material which produced the Hexham Heads?

Other important carved figures found near Hexham include the once popular trio of hooded gentleman referred to as the *Genii Cucullati*. Originally from Gaul or the Rhineland, they were brought over from those areas amongst the waves of Roman soldiers. A fine example of this triple deity was found at Housesteads Fort on Hadrian's Wall, not far from Hexham. Some attribute a phallic or fertility aspect to the trio, as in some cases they have been depicted holding eggs or even as having phallic heads under their cowls. Does this have any connection with why women were the principal witnesses in the Hexham Heads case?

As a Hexhamite with an interest in local history I am excited by the prospect that those little stone heads and the events of the early Seventies could, tangentially, lead us to discover ancient beliefs or rituals practised by the inhabitants of Hexham, perhaps before it was even a town of that name.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

It's no wonder the case of the Hexham Heads has endured – there's something for everyone here: debate over the authenticity of the heads themselves and whether they carry a curse; poltergeist phenomena; a mysterious entity that appeared in two different households; and the mystery of where the heads are now. Theories and explanations are numerous and all of them have been entertained and then discarded by Paul, Graham, Oliver and myself during our investigations. Could the were-sheep/wolf have been a *tulpa* or thoughtform? Was it merely a waking dream? Could it have emanated from the Heads themselves, as per



ORRIN HARE

ABOVE: A worried-looking Paul Screeton shows off his Craigie and Robson heads at Weird Weekend 2012.

the 'Stone Tape' theory? Were the heads genuinely ancient or undeniably modern? That one has had us swinging back and forth as each convincing witness or piece of evidence has come forward.

Personally, I'm about 80 per cent on the side of them being modern and made by Des Craigie. The question is, though, why did he make them? Or, to put it another way, what *made him* make them? The same thing that impelled Colin Robson to make his head? In the end, I agree with Tony "Doc" Shiels, who said that it didn't matter how old or authentic they were, it was the belief invested in them that counted.

Perhaps you're willing to accept that some primal force or entity can inhabit tiny stone artefacts, possibly inspire their creation and then use them to manifest itself in the real world. Alternatively, you might be interested in the apparent power of the unconscious when triggered by the mysterious arrival of malevolent-looking mysterious stone heads. Or you might simply be intrigued by what might just be a bizarre sequence of coincidence, hysteria and possibly hoax.

There's more than a hint of a spirit of place – the *Genius Loci* (or as Paul Screeton prefers *Animus Loci*) – at work here, attached to the site of the Heads' original discovery; or that the beliefs and traditions of prehistory could perhaps survive as repressed memories in the collective unconscious and even possess the power to

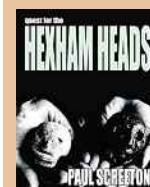
try and force themselves back to the surface like repressed memories.

Our investigations – still ongoing – have come no closer to a conclusion or definitive explanation and I don't think there ever will be a solution. Unlike many cases that are revisited decades later, the witnesses to the Hexham events have not disappeared or changed their stories – in fact, the weirder aspects of the case have re-emerged stronger, and stranger, than before. Whatever you choose to believe, it's clear that the case of the Hexham Heads will continue to fascinate for another 40 years and beyond... **FT**

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



STUART FERROL is a writer, actor and performer from north-east England. He has previously written for *FT* on the Hexham Wolf and has just filmed the pilot for his sitcom.



Quest for the Hexham Heads by Paul Screeton is available from CFZ Press (www.cfz.org.uk) priced £14.99

HEADCASE

A CHAT WITH

PAUL SCREETON

Paul Screeton has been writing about foriean topics for over 40 years and publishes the magazine *Folklore Frontiers*. His work on the Hexham Heads, including an article for seminal partwork *The Unexplained*, helped establish it a classic case and his new book on the subject has just been published. Paul **STUART FERROL** met him for a look back at his career in one of their typical haunts – a Northumbrian pub.

Stuart Ferrol: The case of the Hexham Heads happened 40 years ago. Why did you decide to re-examine it?

Paul Screeton: My original 1980 booklet was just 16 A4 pages of typewritten and duplicated text, although it was extremely well received. I interviewed most of the major players, except Celtic scholar Dr Anne Ross, as well as one of the geologists who examined them, Frank Hodson, who was a jolly sort. Then there was Dr Don Robins, who was their custodian before they vanished. I even had a convivial drinking session outside Hexham, at Wall, with the leading exorcist Dom Robert Petitpierre, who had exorcised Cliveden House after the Profumo affair. Dom Robert gave the Colin Robson head (made at school a few weeks before he found the Hexham Heads) an “antiseptic blessing”, as he put it.

But, after so long, it seemed time to bring the story up to date. I think it's true to say that over the years it has taken on epic proportions. But there's been a good deal of misinformation spread since my original research, as well as a lack of fact-checking and even plagiarism. My book should sort it all out. That said, there's also something about the Hexham psyche itself that has added to the mythical aspect of



“THE MYSTERY WILL NEVER GO AWAY, NOR WILL IT BE SOLVED”

the story – including the “sheep-stealer” carving and the slaughterhouse business I mention in the book. It all adds up. But as one of the witnesses, Sylvia Ritson, said: “What Hexham folk don't know, they make up.” A folklorist would call that a perfect “onomastic” description; I call it telling it like it is.

This mystery will never go away. Nor, I fear, will it ever be totally solved. It just keeps getting weirder. It is all pure myth, in the larger sense.

SF: Going back to your previous book, *I Fort The Lore* (CFZ Press, 2011), you recount that a bout of illness when you were a child sparked your interest in the paranormal...



LEFT: PAUL SCREETON RIGHT: STUART FERROL

PS: Let's put it this way: I don't regard myself as having shamanistic abilities, but John Michell and Paul Devereux reckoned that I did. If so, perhaps it's because when I was just 14 I had to spend six weeks alone in a darkened room with Scarlet Fever, which was regarded as a very serious illness then. You had to have the room almost airtight – not a very pleasant experience. I remember this seemingly endless darkness. Another transforming experience came when I was 11 and saw a daylight disc one morning in Wensleydale at Redmire. I remember running into the farmhouse where we were staying and shouting, “Mam! Dad! I've seen a flying saucer!” Of course, they regarded it as just my imagination, but I know what I saw and I think this is what triggered my interest in strange phenomena. The earlier event was possibly an intrusion or intervention from Elsewhere, the later one a form of death and resurrection – if that doesn't sound ridiculous.

SF: So you had an interest in anomalies before going into journalism?

PS: Oh yes. By that time I found what I'd been taught at school was very questionable, particularly subjects like history. I'd read a book by Alan V Insole on how the Roman

view had pervaded everything and misled historians and that the ancient Britons were in fact a very civilised people. I ended up writing an article on the subject for the local newspaper. After it was published, my Latin master called me in and humiliated me in front of his senior students and the headmaster asked me whether I believed the Moon was made of green cheese. Journalism was a good way out, so I joined the *Billingham and Stockton Express*. Then I was turned on by Louis Pauwels' and Jacques Bergier's *The Dawn of Magic* and that led me to Charles Fort, then to Alfred Watkins and the magazine *International Times* with all these different, anarchistic ideas. I was off on my quest for real knowledge, not the kind of trash that was being taught in the schools at the time. The next thing I did was to resurrect *The Ley Hunter* magazine in late 1969. I had got to know many interesting people through correspondence, and many of them wrote for the magazine and became lifelong friends. These included the former editors, Jimmy Goddard and Philip Heselton, and of course I came into contact with John Michell whose book *The View Over Atlantis* was such a groundbreaking work at the end of the 1960s. This was more or less at the end of the era of free love, drugs and psychedelia – not that I experienced the psychedelia, and the free love wasn't very likely, as in 1969 I'd just got married!

SF: You published *Quicksilver Heritage* in 1974, which is still regarded as one of the essential books of the 'Earth Mysteries' school – was this area your main focus back then?

PS: I think the main reason I became involved with Earth Mysteries was due to my respect for the intelligence and aptitude of the ancient Britons, going right back to the Stone Age. If they were, as the academic archaeologists would have it, howling at the Moon, they were also very busy working out its various movements. Now the theory of leys, or ley-lines as they became known, is

very much disputed and probably rightly so. The theories of Alfred Watkins, who discovered leys in 1921 in Herefordshire, is probably an exaggeration of the truth, but that doesn't make it the airy-fairy folly that many of his detractors point to. It's a case of not throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

SF: In *I Fort the Lore* there is an article taken from *The Ley Hunter* when Paul Devereux had just taken over and there started to be a paradigm shift away from the old views on leys. How did you feel about this?

PS: The reason I faded away from the Earth Mysteries scene was down to it becoming very confused, and the introduction of such things as shamanism and corpse roads seemed to me like people clutching at straws to keep alive the concept of what I called "the Linear Dream". In fact, I wrote a history of the scene up to 1991 called *Seekers of the Linear Vision* (Stonehenge Viewpoint, 1993), which includes all the history up to that point. Looking back now, it's interesting to reflect that today's archaeologists have come round to the thinking that there are significant lines in the landscape – the only difference is they don't call them leys as Alfred Watkins did. In fact, he preferred to call them 'alignments' in the end. Terrain-Oblivious Lines, they call them now; but the term basically defines only a fraction of what were termed leys between 1921 and 1991.

SF: Could you tell me about some of the people you met as a result of researching these subjects?

PS: I met a lot of characters in this line of work – great friends like Paul Devereux and Janet and Colin Bord. Probably the most interesting, though not the most loquacious, was a tramp I met in Hereford called Peter McMahon. He had a habit of disappearing and had a penchant for walking in straight lines. He had once disappeared from

Hereford, where he inhabited a bus shelter, and walked all the way to Abergel on the North Wales coast where the police found him just staring out to sea. When I met him I asked him about the straight lines and he just said, "Rubbish". That was his answer to everything I asked. It was the shortest interview I ever did, and I'd travelled all the way to Hereford from Devon for it!

SF: One of the people you talk about in *I Fort the Lore* is John Michell...

PS: Well, there was nobody like John Michell... six foot six, old Etonian, yet he could mix with anybody – the scum of society, aristocrats, anybody at all! I can't think of anybody else who got on so well with people. I invited him to come and stay with us in 1970, and I took him to my local pub, and friends heard him talking and came over because there was such a charisma about him that they all wanted to come over and speak to this stranger. He took it all in his stride, as he always did; he was just so laid back about everything.

One strange thing that I remember is about John's house in Notting Hill. I travelled up from south Devon for a meeting with him one day and when I got close to the house I suddenly got this bad feeling. I turned around and caught a train back to Devon. I mentioned this to Paul Devereux one day and he confessed he got the same feeling whenever he got close to John's house. It was a feeling of chaos – but not the chaos of John's house, where everything is scattered about but he knows exactly where everything is. I'd been to his house many times, so it was very strange, and I can't explain it.

Another memory that makes me laugh – John once said to me that he often sat for three quarters of an hour trying to think of a particular word, and I said to him, "John, what a fucking waste of time! What I do is I just draw a wiggly line through the word which I think is the nearest approximation, and I go back to it when I read it through again".

He said: "I never thought of that!" So, I thought to myself, I've actually taught John Michell something!

SF: So after all these years, what would you say you've learnt?

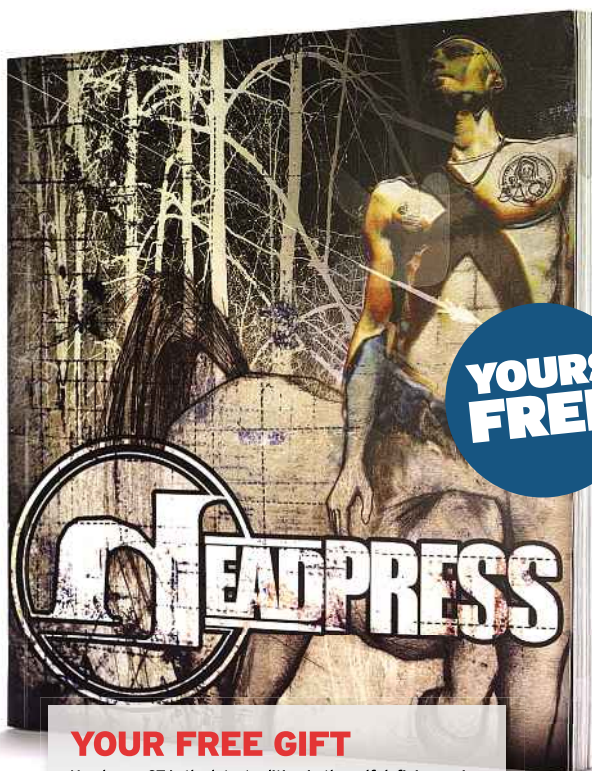
PS: I'm a Gnostic Christian. I believe that the reason I'm on this Earth is to gain knowledge, and the knowledge I want to gain is to understand the meaning of life. It's as simple as that. Many scientists don't accept anomalies and just sweep them under the carpet. If they'd only confront what is right in front of their eyes, they would realise that there is a deep meaning to everything.

Quest for the Hexham Heads and *I Fort the Lore* are both available from CFZ Press. (<http://www.cfz.org.uk>). Folklore Frontiers can be purchased from the author, and the Facebook Group is at: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/169176553174562/305061179586098/>



PAUL SCREETON

ABOVE: Philip Heselton, Paul Screeton, Jimmy Goddard and John Michell – back in the day...



YOURS FREE

YOUR FREE GIFT

Headpress 27 is the latest edition in the self defining series that first appeared in 1991. This colourful book includes an **exclusive interview with Alan Moore** and is **limited 1,900 copies worldwide**. Get your **uniquely numbered** copy with Fortean Times today!

FREE

HEADPRESS 27 BOOK

WHEN YOU CLAIM 3 TRIAL ISSUES



Order online: using offer code below
www.dennismags.co.uk/forteanimes

Order by phone:
0844 844 0049
 or complete and return the form below

Your Phenomenal Offer:

- **3 trial issues** to start your subscription – if you're not completely satisfied, simply cancel during your trial period and claim a **FULL REFUND**
- **FREE book:** Headpress 27
- **SAVE up to 21%** on the shop price
- **FREE delivery to your door** before it hits the shops

ForteanTimes FREE book: Headpress 27

BEST DEAL!

☐ **YES!** Please start my subscription to *Fortean Times* with 3 trial issues and send me my **FREE Headpress 27 book**. I understand that the first 3 issues of *Fortean Times* I receive are on a no obligation trial basis. If I'm not completely satisfied, I can write to cancel during my trial period and claim a **FULL REFUND**. The trial issues and **FREE Headpress 27 book** are mine to keep, whatever I decide.

☐ I am an existing subscriber. Please extend my subscription with this offer.

YOUR DETAILS:

Mr/Mrs/Ms	Forename
Surname	
Address	
Postcode	
Telephone	
Mobile	
Email	
Year of birth	

CHEQUE & CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS: £39.98 FOR 12 ISSUES (SAVE 20%)

☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to Dennis Publishing Ltd.
☐ Please charge my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX ☐ Debit/Maestro (issue no.)

CARD NUMBER	START DATE	EXPIRY DATE
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

SIGNED	TODAY'S DATE
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENT: £19.99 every 6 issues (SAVE 21%) – UK ONLY

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit		
Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society		
To the manager: Bank name	Originator's Identification Number	
Address	7 2 4 6 8 0	
Postcode	Instructions to your Bank or Building Society	
Account in the name(s) of	Please pay Dennis Publishing Ltd. Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assumed by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Dennis Publishing Ltd and, if so details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.	
Branch sort code	Signature(s)	
Bank/Building Society account number	Date	
Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account		

Dennis Publishing (UK) Ltd uses a layered Privacy Notice, giving you brief details about how we would like to use your personal information. For full details please visit our website www.dennis.co.uk/privacy/ or call us on 0844 844 0053. If you have any questions please ask as submitting your details indicates your consent, until you choose otherwise, that we and our partners may contact you about products and services that will be of relevance to you via, direct mail, phone, e-mail and SMS. You can opt-out at ANY time via www.subsinfo.co.uk or privacy@dennis.co.uk or 0844 844 0053.

Gifts limited to first 100 orders. Please allow 28 days for delivery. UK only.
 This offer is limited to one offer per household

Return this order to: Freepost RLZS-ETGT-BCZR,
 Fortean Times, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park,
 Sittingbourne, ME9 8GU (NO STAMP REQUIRED)

OFFER CODE: P1213

HAVE YOUR SAY

forum



The mane attraction

NEIL ARNOLD finds himself amused and exasperated in equal measure by the British media's obsession with lions on the loose in the British countryside



NEIL ARNOLD is the author of *Mystery Animals of the British Isles: London* and *Mystery Animals of the British Isles: Kent*. His websites are: www.kentbigcats.blogspot.com and www.beastsoflondon.blogspot.com

What's tan-coloured with a sweeping mane and a pristine set of gnashers, grooms itself daily, appears in the newspapers for no reason and is often seen basking in the Essex sun? "One of those Z-list celebs from *The Only Way Is Essex*," I hear you cry. No, silly, it's the Essex Lion – a formidable prowling pussycat native to Africa and yet said to have stalked the wilds of rural Clacton during late August 2012 (see FT293:4-5).

Sadly, the only way for a lion wasn't Essex, and the maned monster didn't exist after all. Like so many other 'big cat' scares that have attracted the attention of the local authorities, this particular farce was a sum of many parts – misidentification, hysteria, newspaper hype, hoax and above all, repetition. Many similar cat flaps had gone before it, spawning laughable headline after laughable headline, bringing the camo-daubed researchers out from their holes and the journalists from behind their desks on a day when real news was slow. The police spent a lot of time and money buzzing the skies with helicopters and scanning the ground with surveillance equipment, but to no avail; after a day the search was called off.

I stood back from the crowd and watched in amazement as television reporters gathered in Clacton like excited children and prayed for a lion to turn up. Witnesses, 100 per cent sure they'd seen the king of the jungle, offered conflicting reports. One lady said she'd seen a fawn-coloured cat with a white chest and a long, thick tail – certainly not a description of a lion. And then there were the photographs



The reporters in Clacton prayed for a lion to turn up

of the beast that began to circulate on the net and in the tabloids; they were either a hoax or simply showed a domestic cat.

Every year, I receive several reports from Essex of large exotic cats, mainly puma and black leopard. Epping Forest, Ongar Marshes, Witham, Brentwood, and Chelmsford are just five of many locations where 'big cats' have been seen. But there are no lions – or, for the record, tigers or

cheetahs or jaguars – roaming the wilds of Britain. I've investigated reports and collected evidence for more than 25 years, and while this island of ours is very much home to a variety of species of unusual cat, none of them is bigger than a leopard. Of course, the existence of 'big cats' in our midst has long been debated, and such creatures have cemented themselves into British folklore alongside half-glimpsed ghosts, blurry UFOs and 'monsters' such as Nessie. However, the evidence for out-of-place cats, which many sceptics overlook, is there in abundance. The big problem with big cat stories is that headlines such as the *Sun*'s "The only prey is Essex", or the *Daily Mirror*'s "Dear Kitty, Kitty" simply make a mockery of all the hard work done by researchers who know for a fact that large cats, such as the black leopard, the puma and the once native lynx, inhabit Britain.

The Essex lion story was a non-starter, but my phone began to ring continuously and the emails started popping into my inbox from people asking what I thought about the lion on the loose. But as well as so many people taking this daft story seriously, there were the sceptics who used the Essex Lion as a stick with which to beat other sightings of large cats in the UK. As soon as the Essex story died a death, the blogs began to appear, one journalist eager to dismiss such reports of 'phantom cats' as nothing more than products of hysteria akin to India's Monkey Man and Victorian London's Spring-heeled Jack. Of course, what the majority of the public and the press didn't realise was that six days before the lion story took off a chap named Jack Stone had emailed me to say that during the middle of August, at dusk one evening, he'd been driving with his girlfriend near St Osyth when a large, fawn-coloured cat had crossed the road some 30m (98ft) in front of the vehicle. Immediately, Jack's girlfriend gasped, "It's a lion". But Jack, unlike so many witnesses involved in the Essex Lion debacle, realised what he was looking at. "A puma crossed the road – it was around 4ft [1.2m] in length, very low to the ground, and moved with grace and speed; and the tail is what stuck in my mind – it was long, thick and curved upwards at the end." Jack had spent time in the USA several years

ABOVE: This photograph of the Essex Lion posted on Twitter and the Internet proved to be a hoax.

ago, and during one jaunt through California had been fortunate enough to observe a mountain lion. The animal he saw cross the road in St Osyth looked exactly the same.

It's possible that the Essex Lion scare sprang initially from an encounter with a puma that then slunk away – it wouldn't be the first time this had happened. The early 1960s Surrey puma panic (see FT167:28-37) began with several reports of an alleged lioness on the loose and, at a time when most people lacked knowledge of exotic cat species, a large cat with a "sandy coloured coat" sounded to untrained reporters, and even police officers, like a lioness. The authorities took to the fields of Shooter's Hill but never flushed out the animal. Who'd have thought that more than half a century after the Surrey puma, police would still be combing the woodlands and fields of England in search of a similar beast?

Rumours persisted that the Clacton critter had escaped from a circus that had been in the area a few weeks before. These were unfounded, but typical of how UK 'big cat' folklore works. As soon as someone sees something out of place, a circus is blamed, or a local zoo. In most cases of lions escaping from zoo enclosures or private collections, they are either recaptured or shot dead. The fact the search for the Essex Lion was called off is proof enough that no animal had ever really been seen; the police were merely covering their backsides. My faith in the authorities, though, had already been shaken by the Hampshire 'white tiger' scare of 2011 when, once again, the police had caused chaos and sparked a witch hunt by evacuating a local golf course, ordering the public to stay indoors, and buzzing the fields close to the M27 when witnesses claimed they'd spotted a white tiger. Only when the thermal imaging cameras failed to register any heat emitting from the 'animal' did the officers become suspicious. It turned out to be nothing more than a cuddly toy. Once again, the press had a field day, and once again the sceptics scoffed at the possibility of large cats roaming the UK.

Essex has had lion scares before. In 1996 there were reports of a male lion on the loose around Maldon. Again, rarely was a mane described, but in most of the sightings witnesses



The lioness had been nothing more than a moggy

mentioned a "sandy coloured" animal with a long, thick tail. A police officer visited several of the locations where the 'lion' had been seen, but was once again quick to dismiss the reports as nothing more than a large domestic cat. Two years previously, police were called out to investigate the 'lioness' of Winchmore Hill in north London. Witnesses phoned the local authorities to describe a large, sandy-coloured cat that had been seen walking along a canal. A helicopter whirled over Palmer's Green and marksmen from London Zoo took to the undergrowth armed with tranquilliser guns but once again, the beast failed to rear its head. Then, the *Daily Telegraph* (12 March

1996) claimed that the lion had in fact been Bilbo, a large tomcat belonging to one Carmel Jarvis. A photograph snapped by another witness – who was adamant he'd seen a wild animal – proved once and for all that the lioness had been nothing more than a moggy.

The most intriguing report I have come across regarding a lion on the loose in Britain comes from the pages of *The Sydney Mail* from 16 November 1889 under the heading, "A lion hunt in a sewer". The incident took place in Aston, Birmingham, on 27 September. The animal, not simply a domestic cat this time, had escaped from Wombwells' menagerie after a keeper had entered the cage to clean it out. The "four year old, black-maned Nubian lion" apparently slipped from its cage unnoticed until it reached the streets, where "thousands" of people at the local fair were said to have fled in terror. The creature bounded away, probably as frightened as the public, and it made its way into a sewer after being pursued by two keepers.

The lion had squeezed itself into the 2ft 6in (76cm) diameter hole and although one of the keepers fired a revolver into the darkness – which was met

by a ground-shaking roar – the animal refused to budge to the entrance where a cage awaited. The newspaper reported that: "to allay the excitement it was reported that the animal had been recaptured, and crowds flocked to the menagerie to see a lion which was exhibited as the runaway."

On the following Saturday, however, the news spread that the escaped lion was still on the loose, and two brave men employed at the menagerie decided that, armed with guns, they would enter the sewer in an attempt to force the lion into the cage. Although the men eventually ran out of ammunition, they managed to persuade the cat to walk into a noose held by menagerie proprietor Mr Bostock. He roped the animal around its loins and somehow hauled it out of the drain with the help of several policemen, but the animal proved to be too big for the cage, its head sticking out and allowing its ferocious jaws to gnash at anyone who got too close. By 4pm on Sunday, the by now exhausted cat was finally placed in a larger cage.

One of the best-known cases of a

ABOVE: Lions have been seen before in Essex, like this unusually placid specimen kept by Mr Smith of Southend and photographed in 1936.

lioness escaping from its enclosure took place on 20 October 1816. A mail coach travelling through the Wiltshire countryside was attacked by a large cat that had escaped from a menagerie – the beast was said to have clamped its jaws around the neck of one of the horses pulling the Exeter coach. The attack was described as having ceased when the menagerie owner and his brave dog (which was killed) distracted the lioness, which was eventually recaptured. The *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* commented that: “[The lion’s] owner and his assistants followed her upon their hands and knees, with lighted candles, and having placed a sack on the ground near her, they made her lie down upon it; they then tied her four legs and passed a cord round her mouth, which they secured; in this state they drew her out from under the granary, upon the sack, and then she was lifted and carried by six men into her den in the caravan.”

This incident became the stuff of folklore, and artist James Pollard depicted the scene in his painting “The Lioness Attacking The Horse of the Exeter Mail Coach”, a copy of which recently fetched £1,700 at auction (*BBC News*, 21 March 2012).

I’ll leave you with my two favourite lion-related events from British history, both emerging from the county of Sussex. The first was reported by several newspapers, including the *Waggonui Chronicle* of 8 May 1905, which talks of an “Escaped Red Lion” that caused villagers across the south of England to barricade themselves in their homes. The animal, allegedly sighted in Sussex as well as Hampshire, was thought to have belonged to a menagerie. A postman was said to have seen the cat chase and devour



three sheep in the neighbourhood of Petersfield, but the story reached hysterical proportions when it was claimed that the lion had “eaten three school children at Harting”, even though no one in the region could verify this. Others claimed that the beast had been shot dead at Didling, but locals there stated categorically that the animal had been taken down in another village. After several weeks of panic, the truth finally came out – with the *Chronicle* stating that a Hampshire pub called the Red Lion had in fact lost its sign. When locals started saying that “the lion has escaped”, those not in the know jumped to conclusions and thought a real wild animal was on the rampage.

The final story took place, or so

ABOVE: The 1816 incident in which an escaped lioness attacked a mail coach proved to be a hugely popular subject in numerous cheap prints (and even cigarette cards) based on James Pollard’s painting.

BELOW: The Essex Lion also proved a popular, if short-lived, sensation, inspiring numerous ‘viral’ images circulated over the Internet.

it’s said, in 1933 in Sussex and was mentioned in the *Times* of 19 October under the heading of “Sussex lion hunt”. Four men were charged in a Sussex court with public mischief after they started a scare story that a lion named Rex had escaped into the wilds of Bognor Regis that July. William Edmund Butlin, Alan Leslie Proctor, Clifford Stanley Joste and John Waller were said to have unlawfully carried out an elaborate hoax in which they claimed that while a male lion was being transported in Butlin’s vehicle it had escaped and killed a sheep. Officers of the West Sussex Constabulary were called out to investigate the incident only to find that no lion had been sent via vehicle to or from Sussex, and the scare was deemed a hoax. All four men were accused of wasting the time of the police, who, in being called out to investigate the false escapee, had (according to the newspaper) deprived the public of their usual high standard of service.

And so, as you see, in most cases of lions escaping into the British countryside, they are recaptured, shot dead or, like the Sussex and Essex beasts, were never there in the first place. This doesn’t, of course, mean that other exotic cats do not roam Britain – but the media are as hungry for a dramatic headline as a lion is for large prey. **FT**

For further accounts of more recent lion flaps in the UK, see **FT252:24**.



Islands of the ABCs

MERRILY HARPUR ponders the recurring mystery of how out-of-place big cats traverse sizeable bodies of water to turn up on Britain's islands – from the Isle of Wight in Hampshire to Mull in the Inner Hebrides



MERRILY HARPUR is a freelance writer, cartoonist, and the author of *Mystery Big Cats* (Heart of Albion 2006). When not lounging in a deck chair she runs an ABC website – www.dorsetbigcats.org

Mr and Mrs McGinn were driving in Scotland early one morning in August this year, when they encountered something which added “a bit of mystery and excitement to our holiday”. A huge cat-like animal came out of a field and crossed the road 30ft (9m) in front of their car. “It was much bigger than a dog – about 3ft [90cm] high and 5 or 6ft [1.5m or 1.8m] long – and muscular, with a glossy coat and long tail.”

It was one of scores of similar sightings reported to the Big Cats In Britain (BCIB) research group (www.bigcatsinbritain.org) this year, but what made it unusual is that it happened on the Isle of Arran, half-an-hour by ferry from the nearest point on the Scottish mainland. It was the latest example of one of the most perplexing questions surrounding the ABC phenomenon: if ABCs are escaped or released pets, how do they get on to Britain's islands?

The Isle of Wight has a history of big cats. A zoo, in a converted Victorian seaside fort, has existed since the 1950s, and for the last four decades has housed lions and tigers. The history of ABCs on the island, however, goes back to the 1940s when livestock was reported missing and a creature with the head of a lion and the body of a dog was seen. It was dubbed the Vectis Monster.¹ The Isle of Wight is only about 24 by 13 miles (39 by 21km) – hardly the size of what is reputed to be a single puma's hunting territory. Yet during the island's biggest cat-flap in 1982, there were 16 separate reported sightings of big cats across the island, of which 10 were black or grey and six were sandy-coloured.²

In the April of 2002, Rachael Dethridge, who was on holiday there, and her sister Beverly Futers who lived on the island, spotted an ABC stalking



How do big cats get onto Britain's islands?

through the grass, and Rachael videoed it. “It was very sleek and had a long, heavy tail. It was definitely not a dog or a domestic cat.”³ The sheen of the animal's fur highlights the musculature of the body, which in turn implies a sizeable animal.

It is over a decade since the Isle of Wight had a significant cat-flap, but there are intermittent sightings of unusual ABCs – definitely not, according to the zoo, attributable to any escapees of their own. In May 2010 Trudy Boulton of Newport, and her father, saw a large cat-like animal prowling in the fields behind his property. “When I had a look through his binoculars I saw this was huge. It was a beige colour with a long tail and it moved very gracefully, like a lion. I

know people will take the mickey, and if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes I would never have believed it,” said Trudy. “But I did see a big cat, clear as day.”⁴

The Isle of Skye is no longer an island in the strict sense, as it has been connected to the mainland since 1995 by a long, windy, cat-unfriendly, road bridge. But was this how Greg Macgillivray's panther arrived on Skye 10 years later? “It was 100 metres [330ft] from my dining room window. I called my wife and we both watched it for 10 minutes before it disappeared. The police came quickly and were sure that something had been walking through the wet grass.”⁵

In November 2011 the *Stornoway Gazette* reported that a reader had spotted what looked like a panther on the west side of the Isle of Lewis, part of the Outer Hebrides. “The man said the creature had been seen by several other people and had attempted to attack sheep and a collie dog. Although he did not want to be named he was adamant that he could not have been mistaken.”⁶

As with Arran, the sea passage to the Hebrides is far too wide for any terrestrial mammal to attempt by swimming. And why would anyone wishing to illegally release an inconvenient pet leopard increase the risk of detection by transporting it by boat to an island? Moreover, why would they bother, when they would have had to drive through the vast wilderness of the Highlands first – surely a far more accessible dumping ground for the unfortunate animal?

However, it is the mountainous island of Mull, part of the Inner Hebrides – an hour's ferry trip from the mainland – which has provided the most numerous ABC sightings; sightings which, extraordinarily enough, span more than three decades. The earliest on record is that of Mr and Mrs Brodie, who were up early one morning for a bit of bird watching on the foothills of Ben More in the summer of 1978. “At first we assumed he was a black Labrador dog,” wrote Mrs Brodie, “until he crossed the road and scrambled over rocks, when we saw he was unmistakeably feline. We had an excellent view of him. He had that slack piece between the lower ribs and hindquarters which enables them to leap. I assumed someone had abandoned one of the panther or cheetah family to fend for itself. I have been there many times since then, and as yet I have never been fortunate enough to see that magnificent cat

ABOVE: Big cats on a small island; the Isle of Wight Zoo has been operating since the 1950s, but has not reported any escapees.



JEFF MITCHELL / GETTY IMAGES

again. And cat he certainly was, and in the very best condition.”⁷

On 15 September 2002 another couple were enjoying a holiday on the island and saw “a large black cat lying on small hill about a hundred yards [90m] away and estimated the length of its head and body, but not including its tail, to be four feet [1.2m].”⁸

That same autumn, three keen naturalists holidaying in the area saw a similar animal. “We were returning from the Ross of Mull, when we noticed a black animal walking along the grass verge by the side of the road. We were about 150 yards [140m] away and at that point we thought it was a dog. However, as we got nearer it turned sideways, crouched briefly, and leapt away into the trees and I realised it was a large cat-like creature, definitely was not a dog, domestic cat or deer. I immediately said to my brother, ‘That looks like a panther!’ and he agreed.”⁹

The 2002 sightings cannot have been of the same animal seen by the Brodies, since the lifespan of a leopard averages only about 15 years. Yet in December 2009 another ABC appeared on Mull. Norrie Penman reported to BCIB:

“My sightings were in Loch Spelve. The first was about six years ago when my wife and I watched a black creature, about the size of a Labrador, which moved liked a cat. It had a bushy tail and was loping along the side of the hill.

“The second occasion was last year.

I was anchored in the same bay near the wee island of Rhuba Cille, in Loch Spelve, about a hundred yards [90m] off the shore, and saw a large black cat-like creature foraging in the rocks along the shoreline. It was in my sight through the binocs for about a minute, possibly a bit more. It had a long, black, parallel, curved tail and a fairly squat face and once again it was the size of a large dog – but it was certainly not a dog.”¹⁰

Could these ABCs have swum the eight miles (13km)? Or were these witnesses simply seeing a melanistic form of the smaller but burly native Scottish wildcat? This might be a feasible explanation – except that there are no Scottish wildcats on Mull.

Or are there? What seemed to be just such an animal was spotted – and photographed – on Mull in April 2010 by holidaymaker Peter Harris. “I was pretty sure straight away that it was a wildcat because I had seen them at the wildlife park at Kingussie.

“We pulled over and got out of the car and I could see it cleaning itself. There was a ditch between the road and the grass verge where it was sitting so it didn’t seem too alarmed when I went nearer to take photos and watched me with a rather wary eye. We were incredibly lucky because it stayed there for about 10 minutes before turning round and slinking off into the undergrowth.”

ABOVE: The Isle of Skye is now connected to the mainland by a “long, windy, cat-unfriendly road bridge”. Would a panther make the journey?

Steve Piper of the Scottish Wildcat Association said he was surprised to find that one of the animals had made it to the island. “Wildcats are afraid of humans so it is unlikely it stowed away on a ferry,” he said. “They are pretty decent swimmers though it seems a long way for a cat to get all the way over to Mull.” The SWA now hopes to take a team to the island to investigate the sighting.¹¹

Could a wildcat really have swum the eight miles of often rough seas? Could the panther-like ABCs likewise have struggled through the waves? And if so, why? Or were they transported by a series of lunatics indifferent to the law? Or were they – in the word Charles Fort coined – teleported? **FT**

NOTES

1 FT167: 28-37.

2 Nigel Brierly, *They Stalk by Night: The Big cats of Exmoor and the South-West*, Yeo Valley Productions, Devon, 1989, p40.

3 *Kingston Guardian*, 30 April 2002.

4 *Isle of Wight County Press*, 14 May 2010: <http://bit.ly/WpeM08>

5 Pers. Comm. Mark Fraser, BCIB.

6 *Stornoway Gazette*, 11 Nov 2011: <http://bit.ly/SJMqda>

7 Letter to Di Francis, 1985.

8 www.bigcatsinbritain.org

9 www.bigcatsinbritain.org

10 www.bigcatsinbritain.org

11 BBC News, 2 May 2010: <http://bbc.in/VIAyQ>

SCARED OF THE DARK ? YOU WILL BE !



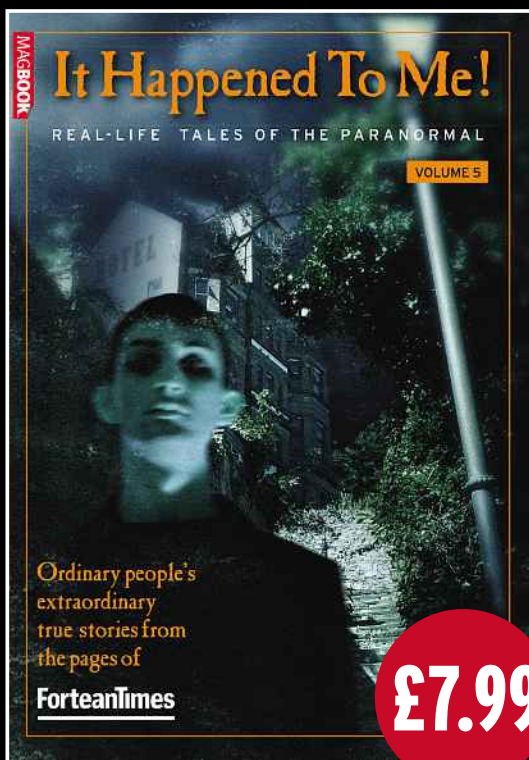
The UFO that
emerged from a
Norfolk lake...



The dog-headed
men terrorising the
North of England...



The weird old lady
who haunted
a staircase...



IT HAPPENED TO ME VOLUME 5 **ForteanTimes**

presents more true-life
encounters with the unexplained

**TO ORDER DIRECT CALL 0844 844 0053
OR VISIT MAGBOOKS.COM FOR PRINT
AND DIGITAL EDITIONS**

ALSO AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE FROM

[amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk)

WHSmith

NOW ALSO AVAILABLE ON AMAZON KINDLE STORE

WorldMags.net

This month's books, films and games

reviews



Yellow press and Yellow Peril

A fascinating study of opium from its first appearance in 6000BC to the present day reveals some hair-raising media-created panics and a wide social unease



Opium

Reality's Dark Dream

Thomas Dormandy

Yale 2012

Hb, 366pp, illus, notes, bib, ind, £25.00, ISBN 9780300175325

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £22.50

Finding that drugs made him rather happy, Aleister Crowley wrote in his diary: "What clearer proof that all depends on state of mind, that it is foolish to alter externals? A million spent on *objets d'art* would not have made this room as beautiful as it just now." On one level it is funny, and on another it is brilliantly stupid, but on yet another it has a flash of real insight in it. Consciousness is nothing if not subjective and opiate drugs, ever since the Stone Age, have been one of mankind's most treasured means of altering it.

Thomas Dormandy's book is the latest general history of opiates and (with just a few caveats) it is probably the best to date, largely superseding Martin Booth's 1996 *Opium: A History*. Dormandy traces opium from its earliest appearance in Switzerland around 6000 BC (there is nothing intrinsically Asian about opium, despite its current image), its use in the Egyptian, classical, and Islamic worlds, and on through Europe and into the familiar territory of the Romantics, the Opium Wars, and finally the current global situation, including cultivation in Afghanistan and

the Golden Triangle, heroin addiction in Russia and recent decriminalisation in Portugal.

There are plenty of interesting facts along the way, including some fairly surprising opium and morphine addicts: opiate usage was almost universal in the 19th century, and Florence Nightingale was among the minority who fell from use into addiction. Red-hunting senator Joseph McCarthy seems to have been a morphine addict, and the English novelist Enid Bagnold became addicted to morphine during the First World War but continued to lead a productive life as a registered addict until her death in 1981, meanwhile writing the much-loved novel *National Velvet*, being awarded the CBE, and becoming the great-grandmother of Samantha Cameron, wife of the current prime minister.

The larger concerns of this book are not merely interesting but important. Dormandy traces the use of opiates for medical pain relief, and emphasises the hospice movement founded in Britain by Dame Cicely Saunders. He also implicitly suggests that the very existence of properly used opiate drugs, and the possibility of effective pain relief, has contributed to such accepted medical concepts as "quality of life" and "good death", and therefore made society as a whole more humane in its values. It is a difficult point to pin down causally but it makes very good intuitive sense, in contrast to earlier societies where widespread agony and routinely horrible deaths would make hanging, flogging, witch-burning, bear-baiting and the rest seem that much more normal.

The other large issue that

"tiny lost souls forced to yield up their virgin bodies to their maniacal yellow captors"

emerges is that the American-style "war on drugs", currently ravaging the planet, isn't working and is making the problem worse. Like America's attempt to prohibit alcohol between 1920 and 1933, which achieved nothing except an extraordinary rise in gangsterism, the crusade against drugs is irrationally driven and takes its style from US politics and US religion. In particular, American drug policies are rooted in unease about ethnic minorities, which in the case of opiates has meant the Chinese.

When it comes to the Yellow Peril, Dormandy has some hair-raising material from the American gutter press: "In our great city of San Francisco, young boys, yes, and little girls, with the look of cunning old men and women, sneak out of the vile alleys of the Chinese quarter into our beautiful sunshine and refreshing sea-breeze... to corrupt our own children." Chinese laundries seem to have been chock-full of kidnapped all-American kiddies: "tiny lost souls... forced to yield up their virgin bodies to their maniacal yellow captors... What other crimes are committed in these dark fetid places when these little innocent victims of the Chinaman's wiles were under the influence of the drug opium is too horrible to imagine."

Dormandy is an engaging writer, despite the occasional iffy flourish. It is jesuitical (or, more precisely, a sort of donnish joke) to say that cigarette smoking is "not the cause of any known disease except nicotine allergy" (not the cause, you see, but just an "aetiological factor" – chortle, chortle...). There are a few errors, in this case particularly on the Bohemian, artistic and literary side: it is misplaced gloating to say that Aleister Crowley died "mourned only by his elderly tabby cat" (his latest partner was there, with their child, and he was mourned by a small circle of friends); Kerouac did not write *On the Road* under the influence of heroin (his thing was benzedrine and later alcohol, which killed him); the French opium classic *Le Livre de la Fumée* is not a "modestly funny" book by Louis Leroy [sic] but a quasi-spiritual one by Louis Laloy.

More could have been said about this enormous subject, including opium-backed currency; French opium culture; British opium smokers including Graham Greene, Anthony Burgess and critic D J Enright; and the extent of non-addicted, middle-class recreational use in late Qing dynasty China and elsewhere. As befits Dormandy's scientific background (he is a retired chemical pathologist), he is stronger on opium as a substance in society rather than opium as a cultural phenomenon, but as a study of a substance, this is a major and important work. Hats off to Dr Dormandy.

Phil Baker

Fortean Times Verdict

THE BEST HISTORY SO FAR OF
OPIUM, DRUGGED KIDS AND ALL...

9

Out of body and time

A study of the relationship between time, consciousness and 'reality' throws up as many difficult questions as it answers



The Labyrinth of Time

The Illusion of Past, Present and Future

Anthony Peake

Arcturus Publishing 2012

Pb, 336pp, ind, notes, £9.99, ISBN 9781848378681

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £9.49

Anthony Peake continues to develop his theoretical base for the cluster of experiences suggestive of the personality's survival of bodily death in a book primarily devoted to paranormal experiences involving memory and the sense of displacement in time and space. It is the mystery of time – or rather our perception and experience of it – which seems to link (or rather, unify) different phenomena. Thus, Peake suggests, precognition, dreams, déjà vu, 'astral projection', clairvoyance, and 'past life' memories may all be manifestations of the same underlying psychical state of mind.

Time can seem to slow or speed up. Philosophers tell us that it flows from the future into the past; that is, from a future which contains all possible variants of the consequences of any given moment to a past in which our particular perceptual path has been fixed. The point at which past and future meet, at which potentiality condenses (or collapses) into singularity is, of course, that equally mysterious thing, the present. The present seems to be a bubble of 'reality' that constantly renews itself as we directly experience the 'passage' of time.

We got the first hint of the importance of time to Peake's thesis in his first book, *Is there*

Life after Death?, where he argued that "at the moment of death consciousness falls out of time and continues to exist in a timeless place". Here, he argues that: "In this permanent now there is more than enough subjective time for a person to experience many hundreds, if not many thousands, of lives." Hence his image of time as a "garden of forking paths".

This may sound like navel-gazing waffle, but Peake believes our understanding of the triangular relationship between time, consciousness and what we perceive as 'reality' is sufficiently important to devote the whole book to it. He does an impressive job of explaining three difficult topics: philosophers' changing views about the nature of time; what physics says about the nature of time; and how our brains perceive time, in which he shows how the neurological facilitation of memory is quite a different thing from our memories themselves.

He explains fascinating results from modern research into memory and consciousness as clearly as he explains the physics of time. There is no objective 'ruler' against which we can measure time. It can only be measured relatively against other things that are themselves moving through time and, in the last stage, the data are processed subjectively in our consciousness. Experiments show there is no 'constant' for perceived time, and that subjective time can be speeded up or slowed down, resulting in dislocations between our inner and 'outer' worlds; moments experienced as so-called paranormal phenomena.

Many experience such moments every day – flashes of déjà vu or precognition; dreams of other lives; odd coincidences; images of unknown places; even out-of-body experiences. It might not be 'science fact', but it is a sizeable chunk of human experience. The

database of solid narrative cases is there (and steadily growing) for anyone who cares to study, and through it runs the mysterious nature of experienced time.

Peake's material throws up all sorts of fascinating questions. Do déjà vu or precognition arise because we have experienced this part of the many possible 'lifetimes' before? What is the significance of the 500-millisecond difference between consciousness and 'reality'? Do some predictions appear incorrect because they relate to a different time line than mine? If time slows down for me during a serious accident, would witnesses see me speeding up? If not, why not? If all we can experience is 'the now', does this mean future and past are illusions? Does this falling out of time at death mean we endlessly return to a beginning and experience life all over again (possibly with new variations)? If the past, present and future are illusions, why am I experiencing my everyday world as 'real'? And the big one: what is the relationship between my 'now' and the 'nows' experienced by all the other apparent sentient beings we know about and, indeed, to this objective reality that exists 'outside' us, just 500 milliseconds away?

If this all sounds a bit solipsistic (*Matrix* and *Groundhog Day* crossed with Philip K Dick), this is not lost on Peake. Our fictions and religions provide many of the examples that help him explain what he thinks is going on. Even if you don't buy his ideas about 'reincarnation' or near-death experiences, this remains a highly important book because of its clear analysis of the mystery of the nature of time and how we experience it.

Bob Rickard

Fortean Times Verdict

SOME WELL RESEARCHED WITNESS ACCOUNTS (AND A FEW LACUNÆ)

9

Higgs

The Invention and Discovery of the 'God Particle'

Jim Baggott

Oxford University Press 2012

Hb, 304pp, illus, notes, bib, ind, £14.99, ISBN 9780199603497

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £13.49



On 4 July 2012, when two independent teams at the Large Hadron Collider announced the discovery of a new particle consistent with theoretical predictions of the Higgs boson, this book was almost ready. All Jim Baggott had to do was write the last few pages and add an up-to-the-minute preface.

But don't be put off by the speed with which the book came out, or by the use of the journalistic 'God Particle' in its subtitle. Baggott spent two years working on the text, and the result is the most level-headed account of the subject I've come across. Explaining the significance of the Higgs particle to someone who isn't a professional physicist is almost impossible, but Baggott comes as close as anyone to pulling it off, all without talking down to the reader, unnecessary technical detail, getting bogged down in 'human interest' anecdotes or hyperbole.

Andrew May

Fortean Times Verdict

CLEAR AND INFORMATIVE: HIGGS WITHOUT ALL THE HYPE

10

Science and the Near-Death Experience

How Consciousness Survives Death

Chris Carter

Inner Traditions International 2010

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £15.99



Chris Carter (not the *X Files* one) has just produced the second of his paranormal investigations trilogy. He was trained in philosophy, and an excellent analytical mind shows in this current work.

The first of the book's three parts deals with the connection between the brain and the mind: are they one and the same, or is

the brain merely a receiver which allows the mind to interact with supposed reality?

Carter uses quantum mechanics and the spooky world it creates to bolster his argument for the separation of mind and brain. He claims that quantum mechanics has made a falsehood of classical physics. We now have a more complex model and a theory that fits better than previous ones; however, classical physics still works – it's just a simplified version. But that's a minor quibble.

The main thrust of the book comes in the second section, which looks at near-death experience. Examples are investigated, and statistics and references support the ideas being discussed. He has old and new reports, cross-cultural incidences and negative as well as positive experiences, with the necessary information to follow up by reading the relevant literature.

The third – and much smaller – section looks at deathbed experiences, and Carter draws out similarities between the two forms of a glimpse of the afterlife. Even the most ardent believers in near-death experiences as evidence of the an afterlife reckon that only 30 per cent or so experience them, even though all other factors are the same.

Religious beliefs seem to play no part in whether or not these are experienced. So does this mean that only 30 per cent of us have the option of an afterlife? Are the remaining 70 per cent suppressing their experiences, or...

This book is essential for anyone interested in survival after death. There is material in it for everyone, it's a good introduction to those new to the subject, it's a reasoned argument for those familiar with the ideas and it's packed with enough references to keep the most enthusiastic researcher busy for a time.

Near-Death Experiences 101.
Gordon Rutter

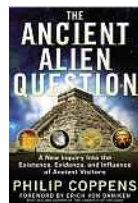
Fortean Times Verdict

THE BOURNE FROM WHICH NO TRAVELLER RETURNS. OR NOT...

9

Visits from far away

An overview of the ancient alien hypothesis roams from Icarus and the *Mahabharata* to 1920 Russian science and beyond



The Ancient Alien Question

A New Inquiry Into the Existence, Evidence, and the Influence of Ancient Visitors

Philip Coppens

New Page Books 2012

Pb, 320pp, £16.99/\$19.99, ISBN 9781601631985

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £16.99

The SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) project has not detected a radio signal of extraterrestrial origin in 50 years, which leads some to conclude that we may be alone in the Universe. But perhaps extraterrestrial aliens have already visited our planet. In *The Ancient Alien Question*, Philip Coppens reviews the literature on this hypothesis.

The hypothesis was popularised by Erich von Däniken, whose *Chariots of the Gods* became an international bestseller in the 1970s; however, he was not the first person to advance it. In his three-volume *Interplanetary Contacts* (1928–1932), Russian scientist Nicholas Rynin discussed theories of rocket technology and space flight, and analysed legends about air and space ships, from Icarus to the *Mahabharata*. In his 1954 *Flying Saucers on the Moon*, Harold T Wilkins combed through ancient literature and legends and inferred that our ancestors had witnessed anomalous objects in the sky. More recently, Robert Temple wrote in *The Sirius Mystery* (1975) about the Dogon, a Malian tribe that possessed knowledge of the star system Sirius, which would seem beyond their primitive capabilities. In *The Twelfth Planet* (1976), Zecharia Sitchin suggested

that Sumerian texts told of a planet in our solar system whose inhabitants colonised Earth more than 400,000 years ago. Humans were created in a laboratory so that they could work in the gold mines for the Nibirians, an alien race which used the gold to replenish the atmosphere on their planet, Nibiru, the Sumerian name for the 12th planet.

Coppens explains that it transpired under greater scrutiny that several of these ancient alien theories were spurious; further, some academics reject the ancient alien hypothesis as racist because it attributes an otherworldly agency to the architectural achievements of ancient civilizations, some of which were non-white. Nevertheless, Coppens is reluctant to throw the baby out with the bathwater. He asks how Stone Age peoples could perform projects involving the movement of stones weighing many tons. The three pyramids of the Giza complex in Egypt were laid out in the formation of Orion's Belt, he says, implying some connection to the stars. According to Coppens, no pyramid has ever contained a mummy, suggesting that they were intended not as mausoleums for vainglorious monarchs, but perhaps as power plants, as Christopher Dunn argued in *The Giza Powerplant* (1998).

According to some interpretations of ancient Hindu texts, flying machines – *vimana* – were built by an alien race, the Rbhus. Some even speculate that they used what we would call a nuclear

weapon to destroy an ancient civilisation located at Mohenjo Daro in India. Examining Mayan mythology, Coppens infers that the ancient Amerindians were in contact with extraterrestrial aliens, noting the similarity in the layouts of the three pyramids at Giza with the three main structures of Teotihuacán and their representation of the Belt of Orion. The lid of Lord Pacal's tomb in the Mayan city of Palenque, which includes a carving on the lid depicting a human sitting in what could be construed as a space capsule, is often cited as among the most convincing items of evidence for the ancient alien hypothesis.

Coppens argues that the hallucinogen DMT could be a gateway to contact with alien entities. Shamans have long used variants in rituals to enhance their experiences. This may sound preposterous, but Rick Strassman, who conducted a government-sanctioned study of DMT, found that many of his subjects reported encounters with bizarre figures, which they perceived as residing in different dimensions.

Although he adduces no convincing evidence, Coppens provides a fine overview of the ancient alien hypothesis. Highly readable with numerous illustrations, his book will be of interest to students of UFOs and archaeology.

George Michael

Fortean Times Verdict

NO PROOF, BUT A GOOD READ ABOUT ALIEN VISITATIONS

8

To order any of these titles – or any other book in print – contact the

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP

Telephone: 08430600031 Fax: 01326 569555 Email: FT@sparkledirect.co.uk

Address: Fortean Times Bookshop, PO Box 60, Helston TR13 0TP.

We accept all major credit and debit cards including Switch & Amex. Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to the FT Bookshop. Delivery is 7–10 days, subject to availability. Postage & packing is free within the UK.

A prehistory of lit crit

Two potentially interesting books fall down because of poor writing (or bad translation) and a thicker fog than the Channel



Three Science Fiction Novellas

From Prehistory to the End of Mankind

J-H Rosny aîné, translated and introduced by Danièle Chatelain and George Slusser

Wesleyan University Press 2012

Hb, 148pp, notes, bib, \$35.00/£29.95, ISBN 978019569455

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £29.95

As If

Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual Reality

Michael Saler

Oxford University Press 2012

Pb, 283pp, notes, bib, ind, \$27.95/£17.99, ISBN 9780195343175

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £16.19

J-H Rosny aîné isn't a name which springs to the lips of most British SF readers. Belgian-born as Joseph-Henri Boëx in 1856, he lived in England for 11 years as a young man, then in France until his death in 1940. And he wrote SF novels and short stories. This collection of three stories also contains a 75-page introduction and 26 pages of notes; the stories themselves take up just 114 pages.

First published in 1888, 1898 and 1910, the stories are obviously quite dated, but are interesting examples of early non-English SF. 'The Xipéhuz', set in the distant past, is about conflict with an implacable invading species; in 'Another World', a young human mutant with pale violet skin and opaque eyes can see another world, with other creatures, overlaying ours; the longest story, 'The Death of the Earth', is about the end of humanity and the rise of a new species.

The book has several problems. The brief bio of Rosny doesn't mention his unusual pen-name; we have to wait for a note at the back of the book to be told that

J-H Rosny was a collaborative pseudonym used by two brothers; when writing separately, *aîné* and *jeune* indicated the older and the younger.

The interminable introduction suffers from a common feature of bad lit crit: state an opinion and 'prove' it with cherry-picked examples while ignoring any contrary views or evidence. The writers, husband and wife and both professors at Californian universities, spend much of it comparing Jules Verne and HG Wells unfavourably with Rosny. In discussing 'The Death Of the Earth', they speak several times of the Last Men, while barely mentioning in passing Olaf Stapledon's classic novel *Last and First Men* (1930). In praising "Rosny's evolutionary vision [which] was unique for its time" they make no mention at all of Edward Bulwer Lytton's *Vril: The Power of the Coming Race*, published in 1871.

The stories themselves have a plodding writing style, and the abuse of the humble comma renders some sentences almost incomprehensible. Is this Rosny's own poor writing or a bad translation? At the end of the introduction we find the answer: "It is true that Rosny's style is often crabbed, lacking in articulation. We have tried to render this faithfully in translation, sometimes to the detriment of the English prose." Oh, how true.

British SF writer Brian Stableford recently translated six volumes of Rosny's work; one volume contains the three stories here plus three more, at a lower price than this book. According to Chatelain and Slusser in their brief and rather sniffy mention of it, Stableford's translations "are sometimes inaccurate"; I take that to mean that they are somewhat more readable than their own.

Since the late 19th century, some fantastical novels have

included photographs, maps, footnotes, receipts and even train timetables to add weight to their supposed reality. In *As If* Michael Saler is fascinated by the process of readers treating fiction as if it were true, whether it's dictionaries of characters and places in famous novels, or fans' dedication to certain books, with conventions and pilgrimages.

Saler's three examples are the work of HP Lovecraft, JRR Tolkien and, oddly, Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. Yes, one takes the point that Holmes is hardly a realistic character, and that letters are still sent to 221B Baker Street (for many years an office of the Abbey National Building Society), but in a book which is mainly fantasy fiction and the treatment of the fantastic, this seems an odd example. Conan Doyle's Professor Challenger adventure stories are effectively SF/fantasy, and might have made a more apposite example.

The basic idea of the book is interesting enough, but like Rosny's editors, Saler spends more time on a long introductory chapter and two even longer general discussion chapters than he does on the meat of his discussion – Lovecraft, Tolkien and Conan Doyle – who only make up 90 pages between them.

The other problem is the heaviness of the writing. For the first time in years I was moved to calculate the Fog Index of two random stodgy passages. The general Fog Index suitable for a university student is 14–16; one passage was 20, the other 24. That's not good scholarly writing. Michael Saler is a professor of history at yet another Californian university, specialising in popular culture; he should know better.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict

ROSNY: POOR SCHOLARLY EDITION OF SF CURIOSITIES
SALER: INTERESTING IDEAS BURIED IN DULL PROSE

5
6

The Doctor's Monsters

Meanings of the Monstrous in Doctor Who

Graham Sleight

I B Tauris 2012

Pb, 225, ind, bib, £12.95, ISBN 9781848851788

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £11.69



This confessedly incomplete (there are, for instance, no mentions of Slimy Sil and Mentors, and Vogans have been omitted from glossary) monstrous *catalogue raisonné* – with serviceable index and a useful bibliography – makes a readable companion to Graham Sleight's stablemate Booy's *Love and Monsters* (FT291:58).

Sleight is excellent in tracing the changing nature of Daleks and company throughout the old and new series, adroitly linking this with contemporary issues. The nuances of individual episodes, notably the Curse of Fenric, are well brought out. He's also sharp in pointing out inconsistencies and occasional absurdities in the plots. He is less concerned, though, in showing the various debts to other programmes, notably the original *Star Trek*. I'm glad he (as I) thinks Peter Davison the most underrated Doctor. I don't, though, share his admiration for Russell Davies' arcane plots; I've yet to understand one. Contrariwise, he's a bit hard on Terry Nation.

A degree of contradiction runs through the book. Sleight sensibly (more than once) observes that a simple television programme, be it for children or adults or both – one of his many topics – should not be over-analysed or over-interpreted, then proceeds to do just that. I wish he'd explained Steve Moffat's weird claim that the Doctor has "never really been to other planets." (But could anyone..?)

Coming back to Earth, full marks to Sleight for his doubleplusgood idea of an episode involving humans and Silurians trying to cohabit our planet.

Barry Baldwin

Fortean Times Verdict

EFFECTIVE SLEIGHT OF HAND, BUT THIS WELL IS RUNNING DRY

9

ALSO RECEIVED

We leaf through a small selection of the dozens of books that have arrived at Fortean Towers in recent months...

A UFO HUNTER'S GUIDE

Bret Lueder

Weiser Books 2012

Pb, 253pp, bib, \$19.95, ISBN 9781578634873

This is a fairly typical 'field investigator's' type of manual with nothing much new except for updating some cases and references, and a few forays sideways in pursuit of 'ancient astronauts', Bigfoot and time travel. Unfortunately, Lueder eschews the orderly approach of earlier compilers in favour of chaotic chapters on 'top' ufologists (not alphabetical), and top cases and 'hot spots' (alternating and in no particular order). Two chapters on miscellaneous topics – A-L and M-Z (why this wasn't one chapter is beyond fathoming) – are alphabetical, but so eccentric in their selection (eg, nothing on Fort nor his legacy for ufology). The book is next to useless, but UFO fetishists won't care: they'll be focused on the list of essential equipment that reminds them to take string, tweezers and a pencil.

50 POPULAR BELIEFS THAT PEOPLE THINK ARE TRUE

Guy P Harrison

Prometheus Books 2012

Pb, 458pp, illus, notes, ind, \$18.00/£16.99, ISBN 9781616144951

Trust Prometheus to find another way to put the boot into the usual suspects, "wild-eyed believers" and the "dangerous" folk who prey on their ignorance and greed or (worse) their illness or grief. In this compendium of credulity, Harrison writes with more compassion for the human condition than in many other diatribes from 'skeptics'. Each of the 50 topics – divided into Magical Thinking, Out There, Science and Reason, Healings, The Lure of the Gods, Bizarre Beings, Weird Places and End Times – consists of a short, well written essay and uncritical recommendations for further study. Harrison declares that he has tried to be "positive and respectful" without "scolding, lecturing or preaching", but often that gives way to an inevitable "scientists

know best" stance. Certainly, many of his analyses are right on the nail, but some of the reasoning seems questionable: when an archaeologist dismisses von Däniken as "a motel operator", it's treated like a clinching argument; and he can reference Justin Beiber, but none of the interesting recent research on NDEs and OOBs by experienced doctors. Nevertheless, his overall argument is that true scepticism is a valuable element of Science's toolbox and that the Universe is "complex, deep, marvellous [and] beautiful", both positions forteans are comfortable with. There is much for forteans to enjoy.

THE INHUMANOIDS

Real Encounters with Beings that Can't Exist

Bart M Nunnally

CFZ Press 2011

Pb, 343pp, illus, bib, £14.99, ISBN 9781905723720

The title is a nod to Charles Bowen's hugely influential *The Humanoids*, the 1969 anthology of material from *Flying Saucer Review*. This is a breathless, sprawling collection of 'real encounters with beings that can't exist'. What the author has intended is to collect those meetings which are so weird as to be, frankly, unbelievable; unfortunately, his criteria are vague, variable and subjective, wandering, as he himself notes, "from ghosts to goatmen". As a personal record, it makes a reasonable introductory book for new readers; but anyone wanting a fuller analysis with properly referenced and cited material will have to look elsewhere.

THE LONELY SENSE

The Autobiography of a Psychic Detective

Robert Cracknell

Anomalist Books 2011

Pb, 302pp, \$16.95/£11.00, ISBN 9781933665511

At first glance this might be a strange book to come from the Anomalist stable, but this is not

the 'usual' self-glorification we have come to expect from self-professed psychics, especially those who have successfully helped police investigations. Described by Colin Wilson as a "blunt, aggressive and impatient man", Cracknell is also intelligent, honest – especially in describing how his 'powers' emerged during a harrowing childhood, and in people's responses to his successes and failures – "and almost self-

destructively devoted to his own vision of the truth". Indeed, Cracknell's criticised the 'psychic scene' of a few decades back; as Wilson notes, one editor of a Spiritualist newspaper marked his file on Cracknell: "This man is dangerous: do not give him information". Also of note is Wilson's foreword, full of fascinating details of the mid-20th century psychic culture, including the early work of our old colleague Kevin McClure.

FORTEAN FICTION

Rituals

Rhapsody of Blood, Volume One

Roz Kaveney

Plus One Press 2012

Pb, 318pp, ISBN 9780984436279



Any novel that starts with a mythological Huntress, festooned with weapons and stalking Aleister Crowley in Sicily, grabs my attention from the opening page. And *Rituals*, the first volume of Roz Kaveney's *Rhapsody of Blood* series, doesn't let go until the final page.

Rituals is a fix-up, a novel constructed from half a dozen short stories. Half are Mara, the Huntress, relating incidents from her very, very long life to Crowley. Alternating with these are present-day stories featuring Emma Jones and her ghost girlfriend Caroline.

Emma is instructed to sort out problems where the magical and mundane worlds interact. Invited to monitor an arranged marriage, she gets caught up in a power struggle between snooty elves and bolshie vampires. Another time she's told to protect a composer whose work could bring about the end of the world.

Emma's having to learn on the job, but Mara's had millennia to hone her skills. She's immortal and powerful but insists she's not a god, though sometimes she works alongside gods, or nascent gods. Her job over the ages is to protect the weak against bullying evil, by killing those who are aiming for godhead through killing and absorbing the essence of others. She has to deal with the Aztec gods at the time of Cortez and Montezuma. Centuries earlier, confronting a monstrous bird deity, she's caught up in the most archetypal myth of world religions.

There are arrogant angels and down-to-earth gods and utterly terrifying giant babies; and amongst a fascinating mix of characters from history and myth we meet Jehovah and Lucifer when they're young men, before they gain their powers.

This book is crammed full of mythology and folk tales and poetry and music and horror and blood and death and love and sexiness and sparkling wit. How can one novel contain so much? Beautifully written, this is one of the most wondrously enjoyable novels I've read for a long time.

David V Barrett

SEND REVIEW COPIES OF DVDS, BLU-RAYS AND GAMES TO:
FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 71602, LONDON E17 0QD.



Room 237

Dir Rodney Ascher, US 2012
On UK release from 26 October

Director Rodney Ascher sneaked into a screening of *The Shining* when he was a young boy. Ten minutes later, he ran out, too scared to see it through. Ascher's documentary about the symbolism and wider meanings of Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* is compulsive viewing, and not just because its source material already is. Often voted the greatest horror film ever made, *The Shining* is a film which compels you to look by allowing you time to do so – and thereby gives you the space in which to think, like Jack, of not very pleasant things... It's within that playground for the imagination that a film such as *The Shining* grows in impact with successive viewings while more shockingly kinetic horror films are subject to the law of diminishing returns.

What might seem to some a backhanded slap at the horror genre, using a variety of interviewees with their own individual theories as to the film's meaning, Ascher seeks to prove that *The Shining* is a film with references so deep that it transcends the genre in which it resides – that everything from the extermination of indigenous American tribes to the faking of the Moon landings (headed by a contracted Kubrick himself) are symbolically encoded in the movie. Ascher's approach is to give a visual analysis; the consistent voiceovers of the interviewees are designed not to get

in the way of what they describe. We never see the interviewees on screen, so Ascher's film abounds in clips from *The Shining* itself and a dizzying array of other visual references. Show-don't-tell in action, via the medium of cinema.

One of the most interesting sections is the one dealing with how Kubrick deviated (with what borders on perverse relish) from Stephen King's original novel – much to King's chagrin, it seems. This suggests how the relationship between two distinctly different media arguably undermines the whole notion of 'a faithful adaptation of the novel'. It also highlights how elusive some of the symbolism can still be, even when it is seemingly pointed out to you.

Nowhere is this shown more strikingly than in Jay Weidner's belief that Room 237 itself is encoded with all sorts of whistle-blowing images, wordplay and numerological clues to signpost the fact that, whether the Apollo Moon landings took place or not, Kubrick was contracted by NASA to fake the actual footage. The very wording on the key fob of Room 237 itself – 'ROOM No. 237' with a small 'o' – is an anagrammatical signifier: 'MOONR' or 'MOON ROOM'. Even the carpet pattern in the hotel matches a NASA launch layout... and Danny wears a jumper with the Apollo launch rocket knitted on it.

Could Weidner's theory be true? Or was Kubrick, aware of the conspiracy theory of the faked Moon landings and his supposed involve-

ment in it, just chucking stuff like this in for his own amusement?

There are also compellingly wacky narratives around the Escher-like continuity mind-screw Kubrick deliberately embedded in the film (rather than merely making a host of continuity errors) and why the Labyrinth and the image of the Minotaur dominate the movie. Perhaps I wasn't paying enough attention, but while good cases are made for the many symbolic encodings within the film, what is lacking, by the end, is any attempt at some sort of unifying idea to bind the different theses together – to show that they are not rendered in isolation but, like a great novel, are brilliantly bound together by one overarching theme. But then there are also great novels which are jamboree bags, more concerned play than coherence. Perhaps *The Shining* falls into that category of greatness. Maybe. As specific as the theories are, they skirt the borderline between the credible and the incredibly bonkers.

Two things do become clear at the end of this truly fascinating documentary on a truly great film. The first is that, after watching it – unless you are being wilfully obtuse – you will never be able to view *The Shining* in the same light again. Second: Stanley Kubrick was a genius.

Nick Cirkovic

Fortean Times Verdict

SHINES A COMPELLING LIGHT ON
A LABYRINTHINE GENIUS

8

Sightseers

Dir Ben Wheatley, UK 2012
On UK release from 30 November

British director Ben Wheatley's (*Kill List*) *Sightseers*, co-written by its stars, Alice Lowe (*Garth Merenghi's Darkplace*) and Steve Oram (*It's All Gone Pete Tong*), is the tale of an erotic odyssey-cum-killing spree, set among the beauty spots and idiosyncratic attractions of the north of England.

Tina lives with her venomous mother, who still blames her for the death of the family dog ("It was an accident." "Well, so were you."). Chris promises her a sexual awakening in his beloved Abbey Oxford Caravan, and in the course of their holiday from hell, her puppy love turns into something a lot darker. She is mousy and gauche, with a little girl voice; he is plump, quick to take offence, with an incoherent wish to be a writer.

The death of a litter lout could possibly have been an accident, but a middle-class writer who accuses Chris of dropping rubbish brings out the class warrior in him. After bludgeoning him to death, Chris steals his life history and Tina his dog, which she suspects is a reincarnation of the family mutt.

And so, like Bonnie and Clyde in Gore-Tex, they're off on a pilgrimage that takes in such sites the Crich Tramway Museum, the Ribbleshead Viaduct and the Keswick Pencil Museum. It's not clear whether it's the sex or the social slights that frees Tina from her previously monotone life, but she takes to wiping out total strangers like a duck to water.

One feels little sympathy for the victims, but neither does one care much for the violent but shallow and proudly ignorant lovers ("We don't care about being fair," Tina boasts. "We care about being happy"). The film flits from comedy to horror to satire at breakneck speed, but the brutality makes the humour a guilty pleasure. It is, though, probably the funniest serial killer flick I have seen: Tina's knitted lingerie and demented shriek of "That is not my vagina!" will remain with me for quite a long time.

Val Stevenson

Fortean Times Verdict

A BLOODY BRITISH TAKE ON
THE ROAD MOVIE

7

Fringe: Season 4

Dir Joe Chappelle et al, US 2012

Warner Home Video, £29.99/£39.99

Fringe has never been afraid to take risks. The brilliant but deeply damaged Dr Walter Bishop and his son Peter provide the scientific expertise to help FBI Special Agent Olivia Dunham solve cases involving fringe phenomena from genetic mutations to melting flesh to shapeshifters to the paranormal. While superficially similar to *The X-Files*, *Fringe* is so much more complex and rewarding in its story arcs, mythology and characterisation – and in its combination of often disturbing horror and deep human warmth.

Two parallel worlds have versions of the same people doing similar fringe work. In the alternate world the Twin Towers still stand, the Statue of Liberty is copper-coloured and there are airships in the sky. When his young son died years before, Walter Bishop crossed to the other world and kidnapped his equivalent, bringing him back to our world. But Peter's anomalous existence caused the worlds to become increasingly unstable. At the end of Season 3, he halts their impending destruction – but in the process is erased from both worlds, and from the memories of everyone in them.

Season 4 begins with a Fringe Division that has never included Peter – one of the three main characters. For the viewer, it's unsettling; not only is he absent, but all the characters' personal histories, roles and interactions are subtly changed from the people we're familiar with, because he's never been in their lives.

Four episodes in, Peter is suddenly flung back into the world, with full memory of it – but no one knows him. He is slowly reintegrated into the team while they deal with attacks from an old adversary and betrayal by colleagues, again threatening the existence of both worlds – and of the characters themselves.

With the two worlds now co-operating, it's fascinating seeing Walter, Olivia and others meeting their counterparts, with different personalities and mannerisms, face to face – a tribute to the skill of the actors. One of many highlights of this season is the

THE REVEREND'S REVIEW

FT's resident man of the cloth **REVEREND PETER LAWS** dons his dog collar and faces the flicks that Church forgot! (www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com)

THE REVEREND

Dir Neil Jones, UK 2011

Metrodome, £10.99

I'm a Reverend myself, and when I first trained for ordination I remember one (admittedly uncharitable) person giving me some advice. "Watch out for the leeches," he said. "Some people will see that collar around your neck and think they can own every minute of your time. They'll suck the life out of you". Director Neil Jones paints that idea large by making his vicar protagonist the victim of a vampire who turns the young clergyman, a genteel village minister by day, into a bloodthirsty vigilante by night. It's a deliciously bizarre fusion of ideas that Jones somehow mostly manages to pull off. Once the Reverend starts to embrace his 'gift', he's meting out bloody judgement on the pimps and villains of the local estate.

Despite inconsistent lighting and some overlong conversation scenes, there's a lot of promise here. I liked the way Jones ignores typical vampire lore. The Reverend (we never learn his name) walks in daylight and he's not scared of the cross –

in fact, he uses it as a weapon. Plus, he has no fangs. The film should also be commended for framing the story in such an epic way. The opening prologue, (Rutger Hauer's only scene) presents the story as a modern retelling of the Book of Job., in which God grants the Devil permission to torment his servant to demonstrate that, no matter how bad things got, Job will never curse God. The Reverend's torment isn't quite on the same level – Job loses his wealth, his family are killed and his skin drops off – and he gets to be a superhero. But still, in a genre often accused of photocopied storylines, it's refreshing to see actual *ideas* at work.

The casting director obviously had fun too. Horror icons like Doug Bradley (*Hellraiser*) and Giovanni Lombardo Radice (*City of the Living Dead*, *Cannibal Ferox*) not to mention Hauer, bring a nice sense of pedigree. But the surprises come from Emily Booth's engaging performance as a horror-loving prostitute and a demented yet effective turn from Shane Richie. I saw him play Danny in *Grease* once, so you can't say he doesn't have range (I still



refuse to watch *EastEnders*. I love horror, but not *that* much).

I could have done without the main character narrating his inner feelings, which made this feel at times like a Halloween episode of BBC2's *Rev*, and the final confrontation felt a little rushed and confusing. But, on the whole, Jones is a director to watch. In the meantime, I can almost categorically say that, despite its flaws, *The Reverend* is going to become a cult classic. Not least because many critics seem to think it's rubbish. I'd have to disagree. After all, not since *The Exorcist* has the clergy come out looking so heroic.

Fortean Times Verdict

VICARS AND VAMPIRES IN A POTENTIAL CULT CLASSIC

6



awkward but delightful meeting between the two very different versions of the young agent Astrid Farnsworth who, like many TVSF sidekicks, is the most appealing character in the show.

In another risk, one episode is set in a dystopian near future, with new lead characters – a foretaste of the fifth and final season, which will have to work hard to be as good as this one.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict

FRINGE SCIENCE, ALTERNATE WORLDS – OUTSTANDING TV

8

Undermind

Dir various, UK 1965

Network DVD, £29.99

Liberated from the archives by Network DVD, this little-known paranoid conspiracy thriller TV series from 1965 doesn't really reward the viewer's time and attention. Jeremy Wilkin (*UFO*) and Rosemary Nicols (*Department S*) team up following Jeremy's brother's death in mysterious circumstances. Together they investigate attempts by an alien force to undermine the nation's morale via various bonkers schemes enacted by emotionless brain-washed human agents, echoing then recent films like *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1955).

Each episode features a 'moral panic' hot topic issue – juvenile delinquents, corrupt MPs and businessmen, astrology and environmentalism, NHS medicine, and the 'brain drain' – that is manipulated by shadowy forces, initially believed to be a foreign power but then deemed to be aliens (an intuitive leap made by the characters with very little evidence).

Undermind is unconvincing, despite the best efforts of all involved. It's a strange little show, best enjoyed by classic TV fans. Several writers from the early days of *Doctor Who* were involved, and the show occasionally manages hints of 1960s *Avengers*-style pop art whimsy. One particularly peculiar episode sees Eamonn Andrews play himself as the target of an alien assassination plot!

It's not enough, though, and *Undermind* rapidly becomes a game of guessing who is the brainwashed

villain of the week, while the team's investigations seem to have no official consequences. Thankfully, a two-part finale does wrap things up, albeit not entirely satisfactorily; but that's par for the course with this curious show.

Brian J Robb

Fortean Times Verdict

THIS REVIEWER WAS UNDERWHELMED BY UNDERMIND

5

Cockneys vs Zombies

Dir Matthias Hoene, UK 2012

Studiocanal, £11.99, £14.99

One fears the worst from the title; Strippers vs Werewolves was not a classic. Happily, this turns out to be a charming little zombie horror that takes the familiar clichés of this particular subgenre as read and splices them with an Ealingesque (wrong side of London, I know, but sharing a similar emotional territory) tale of little people fighting big business.

In this case, a couple of young East End lads (Rastmus Hardiker, Harry Treadaway) and their feisty cousin Katy (your actual *EastEnders* Michelle Ryan) try to save their grandad's old people's home from property developers planning to replace it with (you guessed it) luxury flats.

Being cockneys, they go about this by robbing a bank, badly. Meanwhile, construction workers have accidentally opened up a plague pit and unleashed a zombie apocalypse on the unsuspecting city. Now, our heroes have to contend not just with plod, but with the walking dead too.

It's all jolly good fun and for the most part quite amusing, and when the action occasionally threatens to drag, the likeable performances from the leads manage to keep things jogging along.

Among the besieged oldies are some unexpected class acts, including Richard Briers, outpacing a zombie with his zimmer frame, and an Uzi-toting Honor Blackman. Grandad (Alan Ford) gets the last word: "Oi! Zombies! Fuck off out of my East End!" A sentiment with which I heartily concur.

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict

COCKNEYS VS ZOMBIES – DOES WHAT IT SAYS ON THE TIN

7

SHORTS

THE VICTIM

(Anchor Bay, £9.99/£12.99)



Michael Biehn's directorial debut is a shoddy little Grindhouse shocker; and I mean that in a good way. Biehn's character Kyle is a loner who lives in a wooden shack in the woods. To Kyle, hell is other people. The film opens with a violent sex scene resulting in the death of the girl. To make matters worse, her killer is

a cop. Kyle is none too pleased when Annie (Jennifer Blanc) comes knocking on his door in the middle of the night, pleading with him to protect her. Kyle, reluctantly, lets her in. And then the cop comes a knockin'. Cue torture and gratuitous titillation provided by the scantily clad girlfriends pursued by nasty cops in a cat-and-mouse game of survival. All that has transpired prior to the demise of Annie's stripper friend is rendered in flashback, which threatens to break the ongoing tension and momentum, but somehow doesn't. The character motivation is sometimes daft, but this being exploitative sleaze, psychological and emotional verisimilitude are not exactly in plentiful supply. The final twist, though perhaps not as veiled as it could be, does provide a suitable chill and just adds to the gaudy enjoyment of this upfront trashy thriller acted and helmed with no-nonsense directness by James Cameron's erstwhile leading man. **NC 7/10**

INBRED

(Anchor Bay, £9.99/£12.99)



The Texas Chainsaw Massacre is transplanted (by way of *The Wicker Man*) to the North York Moors in Alex Chandon's in-your-face horror comedy following two social workers (Jo Hartley and James Doherty) and their young offender charges on a team-building trip to the remote village of Mortlake. Things start going

wrong when they visit The Dirty Hole, a village hostelry that makes The Slaughtered Lamb in *American Werewolf* look like a Cotswolds gastropub. The only food on offer is homemade scratchings – "two flavours, hairy or smelly" – and the locals are a rum bunch to say the least. I won't give too much away, but gorehounds with jaded palates might enjoy torture with vegetables and death by muck spreader, while those of a sensitive disposition should probably seek their pleasures elsewhere. The film makes a big mistake by killing off the most interesting character first, but it's all very well done and highly entertaining in its crude, nasty, mean-spirited way. **DS 7/10**

CHERNOBYL DIARIES

(Studiocanal, £11.99/£14.99)



I've actually been to Chernobyl and visited both the ghost town of Pripyat and the ill-fated Reactor No 4 at the very centre of the Exclusion Zone. It was a very frightening experience, and not one I'm likely to forget in a hurry. Neither of these things is true of this Oren 'Paranormal Activity' Peli-produced effort. Clearly it proved impossible, for whatever reasons, to film in the Zone, so other than a bit of second unit work the whole thing is shot in some unremarkable corner of Serbia. There's no real story to speak of. A group of 'extreme (or should that be 'extremely annoying'?) tourists take a trip to Chernobyl with dodgy guide Yuri, things go predictably wrong and they end up fighting for survival. What horrors inhabit the Zone? Well, according to *Chernobyl Diaries*, some barking dogs and a load of baldies; it's more like a bad night out in Southend. **DS 3/10**

Cyclist

The thrill of the ride

NEW
FOR ROAD CYCLISTS

Ride the Atlantic Road

The world's most stunning coastal route

**ON
SALE
NOW!**

**The best lights for
dark nights**

**Eat less pasta,
get more speed**

**£25k Aston Martin bike:
insane price; smart tech**

Team Sky's Mastermind
**How Dave Brailsford turned Britain
into a global cycling superpower**

ISSUE 2 • DEC 2012 • £5



**THE MAGAZINE FOR PASSIONATE
ROAD CYCLISTS**

Sainsbury's

WHSmith

TESCO

And all good
independent
Newsagents

Available to order in WH Smith High Street

How We Were Made

A book of revelations

by William Neil

THIS IS A MUCH ENLARGED 4th EDITION

"..... Neil demonstrates a host of dazzling numerical correspondences, mostly extrapolated from the famous number 666; multiplied out ($6 \times 6 \times 6$), it gives a key number 216, which produces other fundamental constants when it is divided or multiplied. ... Neil applies his findings to show how 666 and related numbers can be found in the human form... in monuments like the Great Pyramid and Stonehenge, in the Earth's position in the solar system, and in ancient and modern measuring systems. It can even be seen in the "building and placing" of the moon. ... If you're fascinated by numbers and sacred geometry, this book will be a treat."

Nexus Magazine review, Aug/Sept 2007

"Highly recommended"

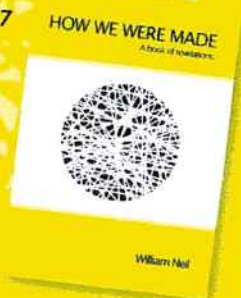
David Icke

Order this best seller now!

ISBN 978-0-9545957-3-9

www.willmneil.co.uk

Send a cheque or postal order for £15, with your details, to:
Oracle Books, P.O. Box 2467, Reading, England, RG4 7WU
Also from Waterstone's, or any bookshop, and amazon.co.uk



seriously unidentified?

UFO CONVENTION

Open to all - from researchers to those with a passing interest - this is a summit on the future of UFOlogy, with a range of top speakers.

17 November 2012, University of Worcester

seriously investigating

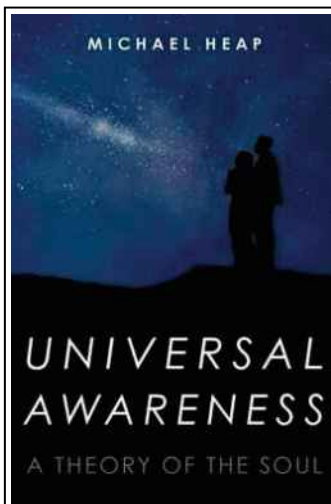
INVESTIGATOR TRAINING

Training by ASSAP - professional body, charity and learned society - the skills to start investigating hauntings, UFO and other cases

10-11 November 2012, Wiltshire



To book visit www.assap.ac.uk or ring 0845 652 1648



Universal Awareness:

A Theory of the Soul

Michael Heap

"Why was I born the person I am?" "If the person I am had never been born would I have been born as someone else?" Am I the same person over time? "What happens to me when I die?" "Have I lived before?" In this easy-to-read book, the reader is taken on a journey in search of answers to these and other profound questions about human existence. By means of a series of philosophical questions, paradoxes, thought experiments and meditations, and with strict adherence to scientific knowledge, the author guides the reader to clear answers to these questions. Answers that, if they are correct, have extraordinary consequences for how we understand our lives and the basis of our morality.

Universal Awareness may be ordered from CreateSpace

at <https://www.createpace.com/3640356>.

It is also available from Amazon.com, Amazon.co.uk (paperback or Kindle) or directly from the author (m.heap@sheffield.ac.uk).

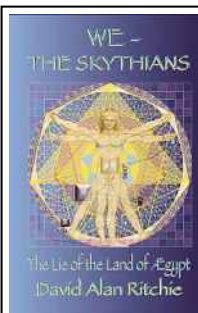
List price: £8.60 (\$13.50)
pp 215+xv
ISBN/EAN 13:1463659458 /
9781463659455

Book Website

Overview, further discussion, reviews and comments may be found at the book's website at <https://sites.google.com/a/sheffield.ac.uk/soul/>.

About the author:

Michael Heap is a clinical and forensic psychologist, an internationally recognised authority on hypnosis, and a prolific writer and speaker on skepticism. His website is <http://www.mheap.com/>



"...every page.. will destroy a piece of your belief structure and there's so much I have not even hinted at here. I can only wish you clarity." D A Ritchie

REMEMBER "ISLES of WONDER"?

Franz Fanon. "Sometimes people hold a core belief that is very strong. When they are presented with evidence that works against that belief, the new evidence cannot be accepted. It would create a feeling that is extremely uncomfortable called 'cognitive dissonance'. And because it is so important to protect the core belief, they will rationalize, ignore and even deny anything that doesn't fit in with that core belief." BUT HERE WE HAVE MATHEMATICAL PROOF. UNFORTUNATELY, BELIEF IS NO LONGER NECESSARY. JERUSALEM and EGYPT were HERE, IN BRITAIN. Comyns Beaumont was on to something...

www.we-theskythians.com

www.islesofwonderbooks.com

www.resonancebookworks.com

07719615577

ALL HISTORY IS A LIE. REMEMBER!

Michellany

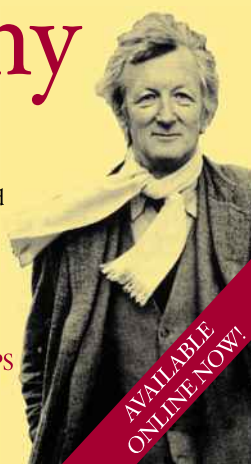
A John Michell Reader

A few copies now available to FT readers • Contributors include FT founder Bob Rickard & Rupert Sheldrake • Numbered memorial volume for family & friends • New material about the celebrated author of *A View Over Atlantis* & *Flying Saucer Vision*



NOT AVAILABLE IN BOOKSHOPS

Send name & address to:
michellany@johnmichell.com
www.johnmichell.com



AVAILABLE ONLINE NOW!

Fortean Noticeboard

Do you have an event or website that Fortean would be interested in? Over 30,000 people read each issue of Fortean Times.* Do you run a bookshop, or publish Fortean books? Our readers spend on average over £20 on books each month.* (*Fortean Times Reader Survey) - Contact:ryan_gw@dennis.co.uk - 0207 907 6763

Books

ME290: Did the Nazis have access to captured UFO technology? Were they forced to conceal their own 'Roswell' event during the summer of 1943; after a crash-retrieval deep within the Third Reich? And did this event result in an alleged secret pact between the Allies after the War, in an attempt to repel an impending alien invasion? Read S.M.Deeming's new 'Me290' science fiction series - including the latest instalment - 'The Squadron' - available to order/reserve on Amazon and Kindle. For more information go to: www.smdeeming.co.uk

HORROR author Lisamarie Lamb presents 'Some Body's At The Door', a collection of stories to chill the soul and haunt the mind. Available from Amazon.co.uk

...DOUBT: The dark and comic debut novel by former police insider, writer and punk musician Ryan Shirlow. Available in print or e-book at: www.ryanshirlow.com & via Amazon or the iBookstore. **FIRST CHAPTER AVAILABLE FREE!!!**

'When there's no more room in Hell', the first in a three part series, is the graphic and terrifying novel by Luke Duffy and available now. Available in paperback and Kindle from www.amazon.co.uk. Find out more about the author at www.lukeduffybooks.com or twitter.com/lukustyrannus

HOW WE ARE MADE: A Book of Revelations by William Neil, 4th Edition. Send a cheque or postal order for £15, with your details, to: PO BOX 2467, Reading, England, RG4 7WU. Also from Waterstone's or any bookshop, and amazon.co.uk. www.willmneil.co.uk

YOUR LIFE AFTER DEATH - This 288-page definitive guide to the afterlife answers life's biggest question: What happens to me when I die? Priced at £14.95. Available from: www.josephspeaks.com & Amazon.co.uk

ADVENTURES UNLIMITED HAS A GREAT SELECTION of books and DVDs on Ancient Mysteries, Strange Phenomenon, UFOs, Cryptozoology, Templars, Tesla Technology, Conspiracies, Secret Societies and more. Go to: www.adventuresunlimitedpress.com **FREE CATALOGUE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.**

Courses

DOWSING COURSES WITH BSD: Foundation course for beginners. 13/14 Oct, Warks; 17/18 Nov, Herefords. £149. Health Course 6/7 October, Herefords £149. The British Society of Dowsers: at the heart of Dowsing since 1993. Tel 01684 576 969 www.britishdowsers.org

Dowsing

The British Society of Dowsers: at the heart of Dowsing since 1993. Tel 01684 576 969 www.britishdowsers.org

E-Books

ELOHIM: Read about the scientific creation of life on earth by extraterrestrials called Elohim. Download free EBook Intelligent Design at www.rael.org

Events

EXPLORING THE EXTRAORDINARY: 4th Conference York, UK. 21st-23rd September, 2012. Exploring the extraordinary is an interdisciplinary network for those engaged/interested in research into the 'extraordinary' - topics often regarded as paranormal, supernatural, religious, transcendent, ecstatic, exceptional, mystical, anomalous, magical, or spiritual. For more information please visit: <http://etenetwork.weebly.com>, or email: ete.network@gmail.com

BUFORA 50th Anniversary UFO Conference - September 22nd/23rd 2012. Holiday Inn, 1 Kings Cross Road, KINGS CROSS, LONDON, WC1X 9HX. Full hotel facilities, excellent close transport links UK and Europe. Ticket prices: £40 Weekend or £25 per day. www.bufora.org.uk

French Retreat

REIKI RETREAT, Normandy, France - Workshop package all year round, includes foot passenger ferry ticket, pick up, 3 nights' accommodation, full board & 2 day workshop from £375.00pp - visit www.raynbowendretreat.com

Hypnotherapy Diploma Course

Fully accredited. Gain a diploma from the Cambridge College with the HPD. 9 weekends over 6 months. North Hampshire. Beautiful venue. Experienced trainers. Call 01256 850 521 for details. Many more courses offered at www.serenity-centre.com

Movie Replicas

BLADES-UK.COM Swords, Sword, Blades (Samurai swords, Paul Chen, Cold Steel, Japanese katana / swords, Movie / Film - Blade, Lord Of The Rings, Elven sword, Collectables, Fantasy Knives, Tools and Martial Arts Equipment to the UK and Europe New stock added weekly! Call (Mon-Sat): 01945 701 022

News letters

Diane Tessman, one of the most respected UFO/alien investigators and contacts, offers 3 unparalleled publications for the price of one! What do aliens want? Will they land? What do the new abundance of low level sightings signify? Read Diane's Exo-Trekking! What predictions are there regarding climate imbalance, increasing super-storms, increased tectonic and electromagnetic activity? Read Diane's Change Times Quarterly! Want to know you are not alone? Read Star Network Heartline! For more info: info@earthchangepredictions.com samples available. Ask about print availability!

Radionics Practitioner

Scientific distant frequency correction of disease and disorder. Lynda Sihra dip.A. A.R.M.A.N.M (Rad.) 01227720540 lynda.08@hotmail.com

Tours

Megalithic Tours Cathor Country Tour (Rennes-le-Chateau etc). Ancient Scotland and Isles. Santiago de Compostela Pilgrimage + much more. Contact Neil - 01772 728 181 www.megalithictours.com

AUTHORS

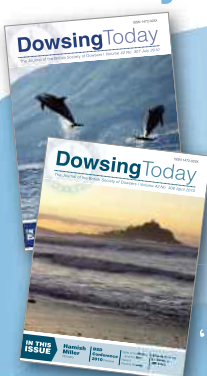
synopses and sample chapters welcome, please send in hardcopy to:

Austin & Macauley Publishers
CGC - 33 - 01, 25 Canada Square,
Canary Wharf, London, E14 5LQ
www.austinmacauley.com
editors@austinmacauley.com
All genres accepted

JAWBONE BOOKS

Second hand and out of print books on Witchcraft, Occult, Earth Mysteries, Paranormal, UFOs, Ancient Mysteries etc. Many unread bargain priced titles. For a catalogue write to Jawbone Books (Shl), 8 St Anthony Road, Sheffield, S10 1SG.

From Mystery... To Mastery



Dowsing Courses

- Foundation for absolute beginners and novices
- Environmental Healing
- Earth Energies & Geopathic Stress
- Dowsing for Health
- Water Divining

Special offer! Join BSD now and receive our free magazine & e-newsletter

At the heart of dowsing since 1933

www.britishdowsers.org 01684 576969

TO ADVERTISE HERE

Call Joy Lazenby on
0207 907 6717



THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA ForteanTimes

Jesus, King of Edessa
by Ralph Ellis

This is it - the book that ends Christianity. Sorry about that!

The Catholic Church has lied to its followers from day one. Jesus did exist, but he was the King of Edessa, a minor monarch of northern Syria with big ambitions.

This identification means we now have contemporary statue and coin images of Jesus, so we know exactly what he looked like. We also know that his political goal was to become both King of Judaea and Emperor of Rome.

If books were valued on 'eureka moments', this book would be priceless. If you are open minded, enjoy the journey. If you are a Christian, please do not read this book - not unless you want your entire world-view to change forever.

Available on your favourite tablet, including iPad and Kindle. The video will not play on Kindle. Cover image based on King Jesus' statue and coins. **r.r.p. \$9** (Prices may vary)

Gazelle ESOTERICA

ADVENTURES UNLIMITED
World-famous publishers of Ancient Knowledge, UFOs, Suppressed Technology, Conspiracies, now available from Gazelle Books.

For your catalogue please contact: Gazelle
White Cross Mills, Hightown, Lancaster LA1 4XS
Tel 01524 68765
Email sales@gazellebooks.co.uk

TO ADVERTISE HERE

Call Joy Lazenby on
0207 907 6717

AUTHORS

PLEASE SUBMIT:

synopsis, plus sample chapters (3) for consideration.

Olympia Publishers

www.olympiapublishers.com

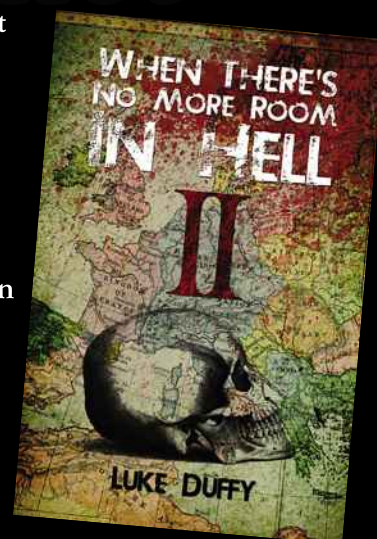
60 Cannon Street, LONDON, EC4N 6NP

When there's no more room in Hell: Part II, the second in a three part series, is the graphic and terrifying novel by Luke Duffy and available now.

The Dead have conquered the Earth, devouring and destroying everything in their path as mankind is brought to the edge of extinction.

After battling their way out of Baghdad, across the Middle East and in to Europe, Marcus and what is left of his team, are close to reaching their final objective. Now, they must continue their struggle against the hordes of rotting corpses that stand in their way as they travel the wasteland that had once been their home.

As Marcus and his men press on, his brother, Steve, continues to hold together the band of survivors within the walls of the Safari Park. With danger all around, he soon discovers that they are fighting against more than just the un-dead.



Available in paperback and Kindle.

ISBN-10: 1480041726

ISBN-13: 978-1480041721

lukeduffybooks.com/

[facebook.com When-theres-no-more-room-in-Hell](https://facebook.com/When-theres-no-more-room-in-Hell)

twitter.com/LukusTyrranus

Leather Roses

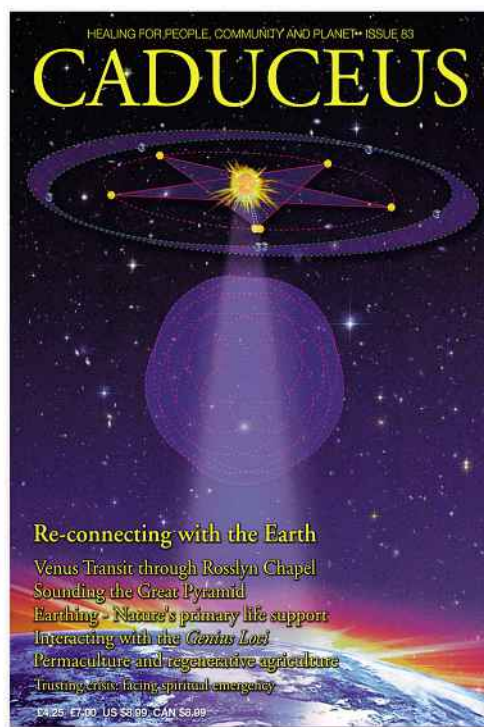
Gifts for people who see life differently..



EnglishLeatherRose.com

*The English Leather Rose Co.
Leather roses lovingly handmade in England
& delivered worldwide.*

Transform your inner being



Authority on healing – psychological, physical, spiritual, ecological – and spirituality since 1987

Summer issue contents (no.83), back issues and sub form on website
www.caduceus.info 01730 816799 simon@caduceus.info

Dear FT...

letters



Clever polts

Poltergeists being one of my favourite fortean phenomena, I enjoyed Alan Murdie's excellent piece on 'The Black Monk of Pontefract' [FT293:28-37]. Although, as ever, we have to take the evidence at face value, this case – along with the South Shields case of 2006 – poses a strong challenge to any theory that all poltergeists can in some way be attributed to manifestations of the unconscious minds of living humans. By way of example I would draw attention to a couple of specific features in both cases. In Pontefract, eggs were thrown which seemed to pass through solid barriers. In South Shields, stones were thrown from outdoors into the house through windowpanes without breaking the glass.

My point is this: if we take a broad, Freudian style definition, the subconscious mind is said to be a repository of material that was once conscious but has been forgotten or repressed. However, none of us, as far as I am aware, has ever known how to throw an egg or a stone through a window without breaking either the egg or the glass. Similarly, although the mocking sense of humour typically displayed by poltergeists might be "rudimentary" to some tastes – though I thought the Pontefract entity's antics with the gloves were quite witty – it is evident that the intelligence behind them is not and what they are demonstrating is their superiority and omniscience compared to us mere mortals.

Mark Graham
Dewsbury, West Yorkshire

Secret liaisons?

I was interested to read in *Konspiracy Korner* [FT292:25] of the latest release of thousands of pages of original Dallas police reports of the JFK assassination, and amongst them a claim that Jack Ruby and Lee Harvey Oswald were gay lovers. With fortean synchronicity I have also just re-read the memoirs of Irish polymath Ulick O'Connor (*A Cavalier Irishman, Diaries 1970-1981*), which mentions something similar.

In March 1973 O'Connor was in New Orleans visiting his brother Michael, a TV journalist with the WDSU channel. It was Michael O'Connor who, as a cameraman for WWL TV, filmed footage of Oswald handing out leaflets to passers-by in August 1963, a still from which was later exhibited at the Warren Commission. Through his brother's introduction, O'Connor visits Clay Shaw at his home, and came away impressed with Shaw's integrity. This was only a year after Shaw had been acquitted of conspiring to murder the President in Jim Garrison's prosecution.

Later that evening, O'Connor records how he hears from his brother and his friends "the real story" behind DA Garrison's persecution of Shaw, namely that Garrison was himself gay, and that "Shaw had a lover who was a doctor and whom Garrison was jealous of" (p.136). It may well be the case that Garrison was, as Robin Ramsay says, pursuing New Orleans gay subculture, and for reasons of his own. Whether all this sheds any more light on the assassination itself is of course a moot point.

Danny Walsh
London

The Game of Bear

The recent editorial [FT293:2] reports the "discovery of a previously unpublished story" by M R James, adding: "although some sources seem to suggest that its existence has been known of for some time". As far as I'm aware, the press releases issued by Suffolk Coast concerning this story – "The Game of Bear" – and the competition to complete it, referred to it simply as "previously unknown". Only when news media picked it up did words like "recently discovered" enter into the reports. A few minutes' checking on the Net by them would have shown up the inaccuracy here. The fact is that the unfinished manuscript was indeed "previously unknown" – until it became "known"! That happened in the early 1980s when I transcribed it, and other incomplete M R James story drafts at Cambridge. I first

Simulacra Corner



Jeffrey Vallance noticed this face on the trunk of an old Joshua tree in the desert near Pearblossom, California. He thought it looked like Nessie. "I've had Nessie on the brain ever since my expedition to Loch Ness," he writes. [See FT284:40-43].

We are always glad to receive

pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the PO box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to siekings@forteantimes.com – please tell us your postal address and we'll send you an exclusive Fortean Times gift.

wrote about "The Game of Bear" (untitled in manuscript – I gave it the name) in my magazine *Ghosts & Scholars* back in 1982. The transcription itself was first published in the booklet *The Fenstanton Witch and Others: M.R. James in Ghosts & Scholars* (1999). It's been on the *Ghosts & Scholars* website for years and has seen print at least twice in hardcover collections of James's stories (2001 and 2012).

The Suffolk Coast competition is news in that it is the first time under-16s specifically are being encouraged to try and com-

plete "The Game of Bear" from James's draft (which ends before anything supernatural happens). I think it's an excellent idea and I've done my best to encourage it, but this is not the first competition to complete the story. I ran one in *Ghosts & Scholars* in 2008 and published the three winners in the following year. In all, four completions of the story have seen print. It'll be interesting to see how these differ from the ones produced by younger writers for the new competition.

Rosemary Pardoe
Hoole, Cheshire



Stratford ghost

Around 50 years ago, my parents were on a day out in Stratford, Warwickshire. This photo shows my mother, Heather, and her friends Kath Carsley and Joyce Bird sitting on a bench in a quiet garden. They were certain that no one else was there when the photo was taken, but there is another faint figure on the right-hand side of the photo. It gives me goose bumps every time I see it.

Scott Butler
Southam,
Warwickshire



Hypersensitivity

I liked the argument put forward by Dr Johansson, in George Binning's excellent report for the Fortean Bureau of Investigation, that "The electrically hypersensitive must, in every situation and by all available means, demand respect, representation and power" [FT292:38]. I would have thought that power was the last thing that they wanted!

Rob Gandy
Wirral, Merseyside

Manichean outlook

There has been a great amount in recent issues of *FT* regarding scepticism and the debate between science and 'believers'. It has made very interesting reading, but mostly it has highlighted the animosity and derision that exists on both sides for the other.

I remember a conversation I had with a few university friends about the lack of realism in comics, when the conversation turned to telekinesis. 'It might be possible... maybe one day,' I said. My friends gave me a worried look, as if I had suddenly taken off all my clothes, splashed myself in mud, and said I was Fairweather Moonchild the reincarnation of Cleopatra. Then one of them (he was studying biomedical sciences) said "Whoever believes in telekinesis, raise my hand". I pointed out that, following his apparent logic that you could only credit

the possibility of things that you have seen, can do, or are, his belief in extraterrestrial life was just as ridiculous. I was accused of being facetious, then he asked if I believed in fairies, amid much laughter.

The problem is that before any dialogue can take place, in any forum – in science, politics, or the religious versus the secular – we have to learn to debate without writing off the opponent. You can't generalise all sceptics as dogmatic and elitist, just as you can't say all believers in the paranormal are fraudulent or deluded. Both can be fanatic and guilty of fitting the evidence to the theory. Perhaps it is detrimental to have such a Manichean outlook. Instead of a believers/sceptics divide, maybe it would be better if we kept an open mind, questioned 'what if' a little more, and did not label people.

But what do I know? I'm off to the bottom of the garden to wait for fairies. Just in case.

Louise Champion
London

Nebraskan humanoids

The late John Keel cites two amazingly similar reports of winged beings from Nebraska in the year 1922 in *The Complete Guide To Mysterious Beings* [known in the UK as *Strange Creatures from Time and Space*]. In the first, a man of

"deeply religious convictions" witnessed a large circular object landing near his home in which an 8ft (2.4m) tall being emerged. Certain this creature was the Devil himself, he mumbled: "Get thee behind me Satan". At that moment another disc appeared and hovered above him (as if to protect him), while voices from within were heard reciting biblical texts. This seemed to have a deterrent effect on the Satanic being, which took off on foot, walking through a barbed wire fence "which was left burning hot and severed as if it had been burned through with a welding torch".

In the second remarkably similar report found by Dr Jacques Vallee in a letter buried in the Air Force UFO files in Dayton, Ohio, a certain William C Lamb – while hunting on 22 February 1922 in Nebraska – saw a large dark object pass overhead and land from which emerged "a magnificent flying creature" 8ft (2.4m) tall.

Further on in chapter 17 of *The Complete Guide*, Keel cites an account of a man flying 200ft (60m) above the barn of Mrs Bernard Zankowski of Chehalis, Washington, on 16 January 1948. This 'winged wonder' appeared to be equipped with large silver wings "strapped to his body and seemed to be manipulating some kind of controls on his chest".

This last account brought to mind a bizarre story told to investigator Ray Boech by a man from Falls City, Nebraska, in

1956 that I read in Jerome Clark's *Unexplained*.

While loading work equipment into the back of his pickup truck, John Hanks (pseudonym) saw a "large winged human form with a very frightening, almost demonic face having wings that resembled polished aluminium that was fastened to him by a shoulder harness which seemed to have a breastplate of some sort with dials on it. He seemed to touch and move these dials."

Having three reports of demonic-looking beings flying over Nebraska in paranormal literature is to me a little more than coincidental. Perhaps the popular song 'The Devil Went Down To Georgia' by The Charlie Daniels Band should be retitled 'The Devil Went Down To Nebraska'.

Greg May
Orlando, Florida

Birdies and rabbits

I think I have an explanation for the phenomenon described in "Running rabbits down under" [UFO Files, FT293:26]. Back in the 1980s, I was heavily involved in the amateur television (ATV) scene in Brisbane, southeast Queensland. We built and used Fast Scan (that is 'ordinary') TV transmitters and broadcast live video and audio to each other. All the equipment was homemade, including some quite hefty power amplifiers, as the power was spread over a relatively wide bandwidth. This was all on 426Mhz at the edge of the Amateur 70cm band, using home made yagi 'beam' antennas that direct the signal towards a particular target.

At one of our club meetings, a senior member said that he had been at Brisbane Airport at the Air traffic control centre (ATC) and was looking at the radar with the controller when he saw a 'line' that came on the screen which looked like an extremely fast moving target. He was told that it was what was called an 'angel', and that this particular one was known as a 'rabbit'. These were normally seen at night, and moved in random directions.

Whilst my friend watched it went off, but soon another one came on. He noticed that the line intersected the location of one

of the members of the ATV club. By a quick mental calculation he realised that the radar frequency was close to a 'harmonic' of the transmitters we used. He watched as the second one stopped and the original one started again – intersecting another known transmitter location.

He said nothing to the Air Traffic Controllers. After he left he confirmed that the club members were indeed transmitting at the time and having a video 'QSO'. We ran tests on the power amps and found that, if slightly over-driven, they could produce spurious transmissions on higher harmonics (known as 'birdies'), and these faint birdies must have been able to produce false returns on the radar.

Of course there was never any feedback but, as time progressed, designs changed on our transmitters and the radar systems at the airport were changed, and I am sure that the 'rabbits' faded into memory.

Neil Howard
By email

Vampire kits

Clive Watson [FT293:70] rightly points out that the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds will not be the only UK attraction to publicly display a 'vampire killing kit' when it goes on display in time for Hallowe'en in (where else?) our Hunting gallery. Ripley's Believe It Or Not! do indeed have kits at their London venue, as at many of their 'Odditoriums' worldwide. I was drawing a distinction between Ripley's as a commercial chain of privately run visitor attractions that charge entry fees, and public museums. In fact, Ripley's avoid the term 'museum' in their promotional material. Though the similarities to museum displays are obvious, they are closer in spirit, remit, and intellectual approach to the original 18th century 'cabinets of curiosity' that later gave rise to the public museum as we know it today. These displayed unusual objects with a minimum of context and an approach that is more sensational than educational. The same could be said of early museums, but today's publicly funded institutions take their educational and social responsi-

bilities very seriously, and must meet certain criteria to achieve the 'accredited' status that is our industry standard.

Jonathan Ferguson
By email

The black triangle

I currently live in the relatively sedate borough of Sutton-Coldfield in the suburbs of Birmingham. My home lies directly under the flight-path for Birmingham International, and having lived in the area all my life, I hardly notice the continual roar of low-flying passenger jets – although I firmly believe 'our' airspace may also be being used for a far more clandestine form of aviation traffic. Over the last five years, there have been over a dozen sightings of an aircraft apparently bearing little resemblance to conventional aviation design. These sightings appear to be linked – in so far as the witnesses consistently report a black, triangular craft, with a light at each of the three corners, and which moves at great velocity without making any jet or piston-engine noise. In almost every case the sightings are accidental, as a result of the vehicle travelling at incredibly low altitude – usually at night, leaving little opportunity to video or photograph the object in flight.

One such incident was reported in our local newspaper (*Sutton Observer*, 2010). I contacted the paper, stating that their initial conclusion concerning little green (or grey) men might be a little too left-field. A few lines of my letter were printed in a follow-up article the following week, where I expanded on my initial theory, stating that far from witnessing extraterrestrial UFOs, what might actually be happening is the test flying of advanced experimental military reconnaissance aircraft. I briefly mention project 'Manta' and the SR91 etc, and how some of these supposed hypersonic aircraft might be using experimental propulsion technology other than pulse-detonation engines, allowing the aircraft to cancel out the detrimental effects of gravity and inertia, thus enabling such radical velocity and rate of turn. I didn't expect to be invited to expand further, as UFO folklore is hardly

a staple of my local newspaper. However, that same week they received a similar reply, mirroring my own hypothesis. The writer stated that he was involved in the construction of these 'machines' in California, and that the ones he worked on were far larger versions designed for military use, as opposed to the one in question, which he believed to be an unmanned drone. Considering the man had emailed from California, he seemed remarkably well informed about the happenings in Sutton-Coldfield; although perhaps he was a former resident reading the paper via the Internet. Who knows? I hope I can gain a more in-depth insight into this mysterious aircraft, witnessed not just in my own backyard, but apparently across the globe. I look forward to further enlightenment.

Simon Deeming
By email

The Antichrist

In your survey of cannibal reports [FT291:10-11] and in the light of the horrific shooting at *The Dark Knight Rises* premiere in Aurora, Colorado, there is a general movement to more and more shocking crimes of violence. This does seem to provide evidence for the theory expounded in *The Secret History of the World* by Jonathan Black for the imminent birth of the Antichrist. Facebook legend Scarlett Foxx goes even further and predicts the birth of the Antichrist on 21 December this year. Her theory on the escalating violence is that his increasing influence is affecting more people and driving them to greater excess in the build-up to his birth. Certainly, the Aurora shootings have an unpleasant coincidence in the dates and numbers. On 20 July, 12 victims are shot dead by a 24-year-old at 12 o'clock during a film titled *The Dark Knight Rises*. Maybe that will be the actual date and time of his birth – midnight on 24 December 2012? If so, there is an extremely dark sense of humour involved.

Jonathan Black's book makes a convincing case for the increasing spiritualisation of humanity,

but warns that there are forces that want us "dumbed down" and mechanical. The Antichrist, according to Black, will initially appear as a spiritual leader and work to unite the great religions, but will eventually realise his power and try to destroy the spiritual dimension by "explaining it away". Commercial forces also seem to have the same agenda in making humanity stupid. We have to adopt fortaean principles and question what we are told, take a long look at every ideology we are offered and not accept any attempts to stop us thinking. It's not the end of the world, but in 30 years it will be a very different place.

Brian Sharland
London

Imaginary friends

In 2009 I wrote to you regarding my daughter's quasi-corporeal companions known as the Suzies [FT258:77]. She was just coming up to her fifth birthday then. Just to let you know, she is now eight years old and said that she "made the Suzies up."

Steve Hon
By email

JD Carr on TV

Re the forum column about John Dickson Carr [FT288:55]: his stories about Colonel March and the Department of Queer Complaints were made into a television series. Many of the resulting episodes have a decidedly fortaean slant – for example, there's one about an invisible man and another where the abominable snowman comes to London to kill off English alpinists. Those and some others can be found on YouTube.

Pierre Huet
By email



TONY HUSBAND

First-hand accounts from *FT* readers and browsers of www.forteantimes.com

Night of the space chimes

July 1958. A hot Santa Ana wind was rushing from the desert into Los Angeles, chasing away the smog but making it too hot to sleep. Usually the LA basin has two seasons – or had; with global warming all bets are off. Back in the day, the two seasons were day and night. After the morning fog burnt off it would be hot and, at night, downright chilly. Desert climate.

A collection of Hollywood faces were hanging out at the outdoor patio of the Chez Paulette, a coffee shop on the Sunset Strip. Column items present included Marlon Brando and Joan Collins, who said we had met before. We hadn't, but I wasn't going to argue.

Dennis Hopper was just back from acting in a New York TV show. He was usually boisterous, on the cusp of being a loudmouth, not the laid-back *Easy Rider* biker. But on that night he was unusually subdued. "What's with you?" "Aw man, something so weird happened back in New York. I don't want to talk about it." Enough said.

Dennis and I had been hanging out together for over three years. I'd made a stir, acting on New York TV and MCA, my powerhouse agency, decreed I should relocate to the Left Coast. I'd moved into a haunted house in the hills above Hollywood and the Strip. Laurel Canyon. Dennis lived nearby. He had a healthy libido. A lot of our energy was consumed by getting stoned and chasing women.

Around 3am Dennis, aerodynamics engineer Bill Gowdy and I decided to drive out to the ocean. We squeezed into Dennis's little open-top red MG and headed west on Sunset. He often drove like a maniac, but that night we moved at a sedate speed. As we left the Strip behind, he began to talk about the previous night in New York.

After his Big Apple gig, Dennis and some friends went up to Tally Brown's place in Washington Heights to smoke some grass. I can use real names because all concerned have checked out well beyond the Statute of Limitations, into the next dimension.

Tally, an overweight woman with the singing voice of a baritone angel, lived in a ground-floor apartment. Its front door opened directly onto the street across from an unobstructed view of the George Washington Bridge. Shortly after the gathering convened, Dennis announced he was receiving messages from extraterrestrials, who stated they were hovering directly overhead and were communicating with him because he was capable of receiving.

Dennis relayed the purported info to the others. Their ship, they said, consisted of three rings, spinning clockwise and anticlockwise like an electric generator. The crew were in two bubbles on the outer ring and never interacted during flight. One bubble held the engineers, the other the explorers – nine and eleven respectively.

Someone said, "If they're really up there, tell 'em to give us a sign." Immediately there was an ear-splitting burst of static from the radio, which wasn't on. My

friend Mike Arquette, father to the Arquette film actors and briefly Nick Cage's father-in-law, subsequently confirmed this incident to me.

"I never even read Buck Rogers," Dennis plaintively stated. Indeed, in all the time I'd known him, he'd never talked about UFOs. I might mention that, as we drove west, Dennis, Bill and I were stone sober. At this stage in Dennis's retailing, we were gliding through the flats of Beverly Hills. He was genuinely troubled. The MG was behaving normally. The boulevard was deserted. Past Beverly Hills, Sunset becomes hilly and rural – or it did back then; no houses in sight. For all I know,

"Not music. Just overlapping sounds. Wong, Wong, Wong – vibrating like cliché sc-fi music"

the whole road could now be lined with condos and strip malls.

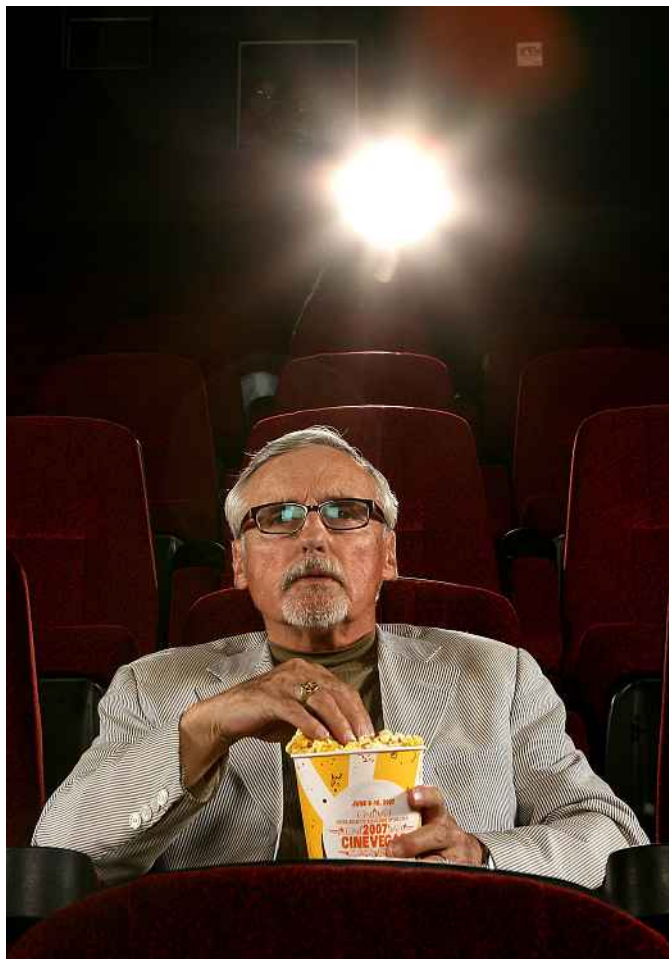
It was around 4am. Moonless, fogless black night. Abruptly, as we were gently ascending a hill, we ran out of gas. I thought, oh shit – we're gonna have to get out and push. No gas station for miles around. With our slight momentum, we continued to glide uphill it seemed an inordinately long time. We reached the crest and coasted down into a bowl of darkness. Then we heard an odd sound. It was as if huge chimes were suspended in space and were being gently tapped by a giant hammer. Not music. Just overlapping sounds. Wong, Wong, Wong – vibrating like cliché sci-fi movie music. A deep tone would be followed by a higher one; maybe three or four distinct registers. It was loud, all-pervasive, multi-directional; above, below, all around. This was the 1950s – mega synthesizers were not yet available. None of us spoke as, accompanied by the chimes, we coasted up and down some fairly steep grades. Ultimately we rolled right down to Pacific Coast Highway and glided to the pumps of an open gas station. The tones had faded away. Immediately we questioned each other. Yes, we had all heard the otherworldly sounds.

I'm not clear about time. We travelled in black night, then it was daybreak.

With the gas tank filled, we drove north on Pacific Coast Highway. Dawn had arrived, traffic very light. We drove around seven miles – the car behaving normally. As we rounded a sharp right curve, the engine abruptly stopped. It didn't sputter, just ceased running. We glided onto the highway's shoulder. A moment later, a Coupe de Ville came screaming round the curve behind us, speeding out of control. Momentarily on two wheels, skidding all over the road. The driver drunk, certifiable, or both. If the MG hadn't died, we would have been right in this maniac's path.

As soon as the madman was gone, the car's engine started up by itself. Dennis didn't turn the ignition key or fiddle in any way.

We dozed on Zuma Beach for a couple of hours, then drove back into town via Mulholland Drive, which runs along the spine of the Santa Monica Mountains and then the Hollywood Hills. We arrived at



my mother's house, in the Los Feliz district, just east of Hollywood. Present were my 13-year-old sister Erica and her partner in crime, Michelle, who was later to be married to John Phillips of The Mamas & The Papas. Referring to Michelle, Dennis said, in an aside to me, "She looks like Brigitte Bardot".

ETIENNE GUILLEMAN

A few years later, after the success of *Easy Rider*, Dennis shot his career in the foot, directing a film so bad it has never been released. Nursing his wounds, he briefly married Michelle and they moved together to Taos, New Mexico.

Anyway, after the night of the space chimes I sailed to Tahiti, and the MG was a total write-off, never to run again.

Weston Gavin
London

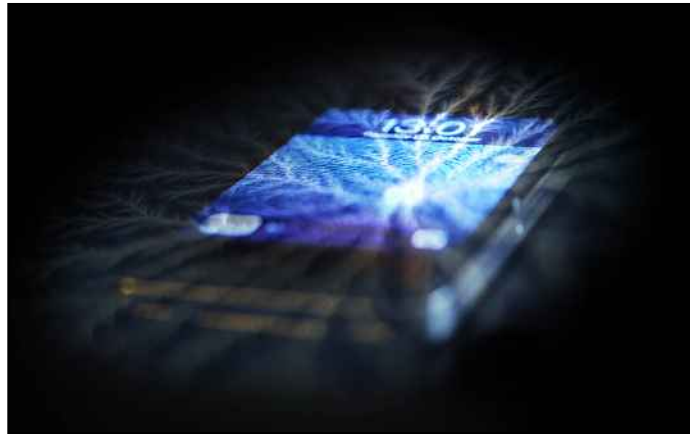
Hide and seek

When I was about 12 or 13 years old, I lived with my family in an old Victorian house in Withington, Manchester. With some school friends we had experimented with table-tilting in our front cellar, with some success, but each of us accused the others of cheating.

Some time later I began to hear knocking sounds from the attic, which at one time would have been the servants' bedrooms. It sounded as if the furniture was being sharply rapped by someone's knuckles and was quite loud. I would go and investigate, not being scared at that time by such things. As soon as I entered the room and switched on the light, the knocking would stop, and there was never anything to see. It would then start up in a different room with the same results, and it became a sort of game of hide and seek, but without the finding!

The sounds were sporadic and sometimes didn't happen for weeks. My stepmother refused to go into the cellar to fetch coal after she swore something pinched her bottom as she climbed the steps one night. My father thought this hilarious, but I remember she was very upset at the time. Eventually the knockings just stopped. Other members of the family heard them, and my aunt and stepmother said we had caused them by "mucking about" calling up spirits.

Brian Ellwood
By email 2001



Mystery mobile call

We stayed overnight for New Year at some close friends' place, a semi-detached villa that's been in one of the couple's family for years. We got back to the house at about 3am after leaving a party. I awoke before my friends and went downstairs to make coffee. I had been pottering about for some 45 minutes before they both came down to seek hangover remedies.

On entering the kitchen, my friends asked me who I had been speaking to on my mobile phone at 5am and why I had walked up and down their landing while making the call, disturbing them as they were trying to sleep. Now there was no one else apart from us in the house; their children were with family overnight and their other relatives who own the adjoining house were away for New Year, so there would be no noise to carry through the building from next door.

Being a bit groggy still, I explained that I hadn't got out of bed until 45 minutes before they did, and I hadn't received or made any calls on my mobile as I had left it in their lounge when we had got back from the party.

I asked if they had been able to hear what 'I' had apparently been saying, but they both said that it had been indistinct; their landing is quite long and their door had been closed. They both assured me that the voice had become louder and then quieter, as if somebody was walking towards and then away from their door. They even heard the tread of floorboards.

It's true that we had celebrated New Year with a few drinks, but we were not exceptionally drunk and I most certainly wasn't in a state where I couldn't remember what I was doing. I was also on a different

floor to them, so wouldn't have any reason to go up to their room. I had to show my friends the received and dialled numbers on my phone before they believed that I hadn't drunkenly got up when they thought I had.

I myself didn't hear anything and I asked if it could have been noise from outside the house, but they were adamant that it was a different sound to what they would recognise as passers-by or noise from the adjoining house; one of them even went next door to check, and there was no one there.

My friends are both rational adults, parents to two children and firm sceptics. They laughed and joked about it, although my female friend became a bit distressed later as all the theories we could think of to explain the 'voice' they had heard were dashed.

TheQuixote
By email

Thyme Slip

As my partner and I approached the ruins of Netley Abbey near Southampton, about 5m (16ft) away from the first walls, we both noticed a strong smell of thyme and mentioned it to each other straight away. We were not anywhere near the shrubbery and the smell was contained in about

a 2sq m (22sq ft) area. Could it have once been a herb garden, the smell slipping through time? Well, maybe...

Brian Hopkins
Southsea, Hampshire

Cracking branches

One balmy summer night back in 1996 when Rocky Mountain National Park still stayed open at night, my uncle, aunt, two younger cousins and myself (aged 14) went up there for a drive. We stopped partway up the mountain to watch the satellites. As we took off toward the bottom again, we became slowly aware of a sound following our tiny hatchback. It was a great Thud! Thud! along with the sounds of large branches cracking. We stopped, to the children's chagrin, and my aunt took to throwing things into the dark forest to scare us. As we laughed about it, we heard the angry thudding and cracking coming closer. Even my uncle, who has done special effects for horror movies, was scared. All the windows were down and I leaned out, curiously watching the treetops bend to this huge-sounding – but invisible – something. "Go faster!" I instructed my uncle, who was white-knuckling the wheel, speeding down the curvy road. 30... 35... 40mph... We topped out at 45mph (72 km/h), a dangerous speed, but the Thing kept pace, just behind the car. My cousins were crying, but I was far more curious than scared. It finally receded into the woods some 30 yards (27m) from the exit. The thing made no sound but the thudding and breaking, and I saw nothing but treetops waving in pattern after us. To this day the others will not speak of it. Wendigo perhaps, the Native American spirit of hunger? I still wonder...

Tenni Shoe
Colorado

NOW ON SALE!

IT HAPPENED TO ME! VOLUME 5

The latest collection of first-hand accounts of high strangeness from the pages of *Fortean Times* includes tales of dog-headed men, haunted hotels, disappearing buildings and much, much more. Now available from WH Smith and Amazon.co.uk



POLICE THE ILLUSTRATED LAW COURTS AND WEEK

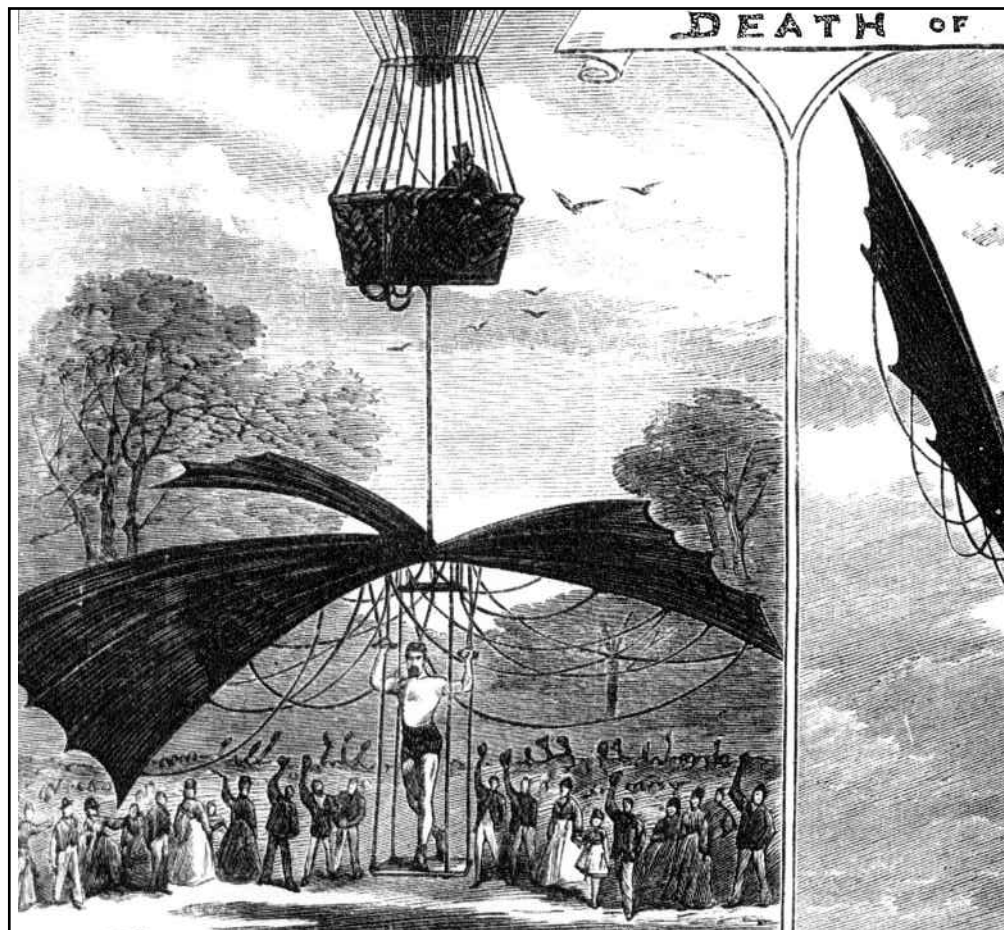
JAN BONDESON presents more sensational stories and startling Victorian images from the "worst newspaper in England" – the *Illustrated Police News*.

17. VINCENT DE GROOF, THE FLYING MAN

In the 1860s and 1870s, the search for man-powered flight was well underway. Intrepid aeronauts invented fantastic-looking flying machines, like 'The Bat', featured by the *Illustrated Police News* in June 1873. The life expectancy of these pioneers of aviation was generally very short. In Belgium, the shoemaker Vincent de Groof had been active designing ornithopters since the late 1860s. He had tried his inventions out in Brussels by having them released from a balloon, but after several heavy crashes, and some undignified scenes where the fallen aeronaut was pelted by the mob, the Belgian authorities forbade such foolhardy escapades. Undaunted, de Groof moved to England, where the accident-prone Belgian became known as 'the Flying Man'.

In June 1874, de Groof's latest ornithopter was ready to be tested. Made from a frame of wood and rattan, with the tail and wings covered with weatherproof silk, it looked like something out of 'Donald Duck' magazine. On 29 June, the Flying Man was taken aloft, with his ornithopter dangling from the basket of a balloon manoeuvred by the aeronaut Mr Simmons, and released at the outskirts of London. It is surprising but true that de Groof made it down in one piece: his machine glided down safely and landed in Epping Forest. This unexpected reprieve seems to have put dangerous thoughts into de Groof's head. What if he made a grand descent from Mr Simmons's balloon over central London, to show the world that he really was the Flying Man?

On 9 July, Mr Simmons's balloon made another ascent, this time from Cremorne Gardens, with the ornithopter dangling from its basket. The balloon rose to an altitude of 4,000ft (1,200m) over the Thames, before descending to 1,000ft (300m) and releasing de Groof's machine. But instead of gliding safely



TOP LEFT: The Bat, from *IPN*, 21 June 1873, taken from an illustrated pamphlet de Groof had written.

ILLUSTRATED NEWS

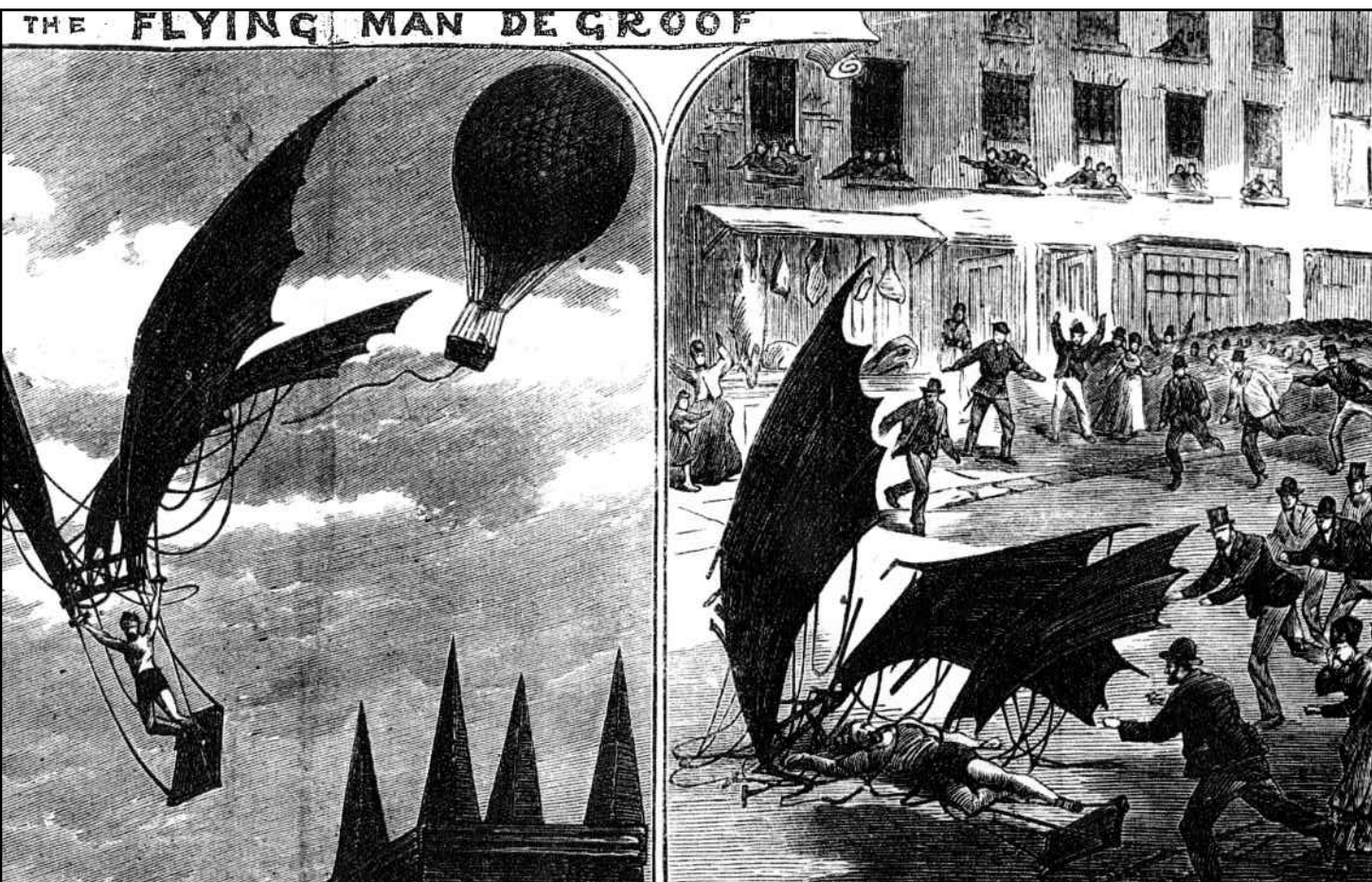
WEEKLY RECORD



down to the London rooftops, the ornithopter fell like a stone, its wings trapped in an upright position. The contraption landed "with great violence" in Robert Street, Chelsea. What remained of the wretched aeronaut was taken to Chelsea Infirmary, where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

Madame de Groof fainted when she saw the ornithopter fall, and Mr Simmons the balloonist suffered the same fate when he saw his colleague plummet to his death. This caused the balloon to swerve dangerously and drift away towards Essex; by the time the smelling-salts had been applied to the swooned aeronaut, his balloon was in serious danger of crash-landing. In the end, the distraught balloonist managed to land on an Essex railway line, just when a train approached! The driver only just managed to bring the train to a standstill, however, thus preventing further casualties as a result of de Groof's foolhardy experiment.

THE FLYING MAN DE GROOF



how to subscribe

ANNUAL SUB of 12 issues (inc p&p) UK £39.98; EC £47.50; USA \$79.99 (\$143.98 for 24 issues); Rest of World £55.
Please see house ads in the latest issue for details of special offers.

North America (US & Canada)

Subscribers should contact: IMS, 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 404, Virginia Beach, VA 23454, USA. Tel: 888-428 6676, or 800-428 3003; Fax: 757 428 6253; Or order online at www.imsnews.com.

UK, Europe & rest of world

Major credit cards accepted. Cheques or money orders should be in sterling, preferably drawn on a London bank and made payable to Dennis Publishing. Mail to: **Fortean Times** Dovetail Services, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne, ME9 8GU, UK. NB: This address should be used for orders and subscriptions only.

Telephone payments and queries: 0844 844 0049.

Fax payments and queries: 0844 815 0866.

E-mail payments and queries: ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk

how to submit

Dennis Publishing reserves all rights to reuse material submitted by FT readers and contributors in any medium or format.

Illustrations

Contact the art director by email (etienne@forteanimes.com) before sending samples of work. We cannot guarantee to respond to unsolicited work, though every effort will be made to do so.

Article submissions

Please send all submissions to David Sutton, Editor, Fortean Times, PO BOX 71602, London E17 0QD, UK or email drsutton@forteanimes.com. com. As we receive a large volume of submissions, a decision may not be immediate. A contributors' guide is available at www.forteanimes.com.

Letters

Letters of comment or about experiences are welcome. Send to PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK or email sieveking@forteanimes.com. We reserve the right to edit submissions.

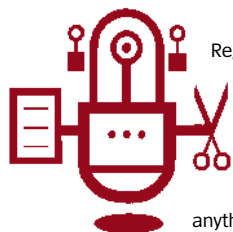
Books, periodicals, DVDs and other material for review

Send to: Fortean Times, PO BOX 71602, London E17 0QD, UK.

Caveat

FT aims to present the widest range of interpretations to stimulate discussion and welcomes helpful criticism. The opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the editors. FT can take no responsibility for submissions, but will take all reasonable care of material in its possession. Requests for return of material should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or an International Reply Coupon.

We occasionally use material that has been placed in the public domain. It is not always possible to identify the copyright holder. If you claim credit for something we've published, we'll be pleased to make acknowledgement.



Reg

Clippers wanted!

began in 1973. One of the delights for the editors is receiving packets of clips from Borneo or Brazil, Saudi Arabia or Siberia. We invite you to join in the fun and send in anything weird, from trade journals, local newspapers, extracts from obscure tomes, library newspaper archives.

or

To minimise the time spent on preparing clippings for a Fort Sort, we ask that you cut them out and not fold them too small. Mark each clip (on the front, where possible) with the source, date and your name, so that we can credit you in the listing (right) when we use the material. For UK local and overseas clips, please give the town of publication. For foreign language clips, we appreciate brief translations. To avoid confusion over day and month, please write the date in this form: **1 Oct 2012**. If you send photocopies, copy on one side of the paper only.

Mail to: Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK
E-mail: sieveking@forteanimes.com
or post on the FT website at www.forteanimes.co.uk, where there is a contributor's guide.

Why Fortean?



Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature

of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

FT toes no party line.

Special Correspondents

AUSTRALIA Graham Cordon (SA), Tony Healy (ACT), John Palazzi (NSW), Len Watson (Qld).
CANADA Brian Chapman (BC), Graham Conway (BC). **CYBERSPACE** Richard Alexander, John F Callahan, Hugh Henry, Neil L Inglis, Michael Newton, Steve Scanlon. **ENGLAND** Gail-Nina Anderson, Louise Bath, Claire Blamey, Peter Christie, Mat Coward, Paul Farthing, George Featherston, Paul Gallagher, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Anne Hardwick, Richard Lowke, Alexis Lykiard, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Tom Ruffles, Meryl Santis, Paul Screeton, Gary Stocker, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Nick Warren, Bobby Zodiac. **FINLAND** Heather Fowler. **France** Michel Meurger. **GERMANY** Ulrich Magin, Cliff Wren. **HOLLAND** Robin Pascoe. **IRELAND** Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Andrew Munro. **ISRAEL** Zvi Ron. **NEW ZEALAND** Peter Hassall. **ROMANIA** Iosif Boczor. **SCOTLAND** Roger Musson, Leslie John Thomson. **SWEDEN** Sven Rosén. **THAILAND** Chris Williams. **TURKEY** Izet Goksu. **USA** Loren Coleman (ME), Jim Conlan (CT), Myron Hoyt (ME), Dolores Phelps (TX), Jim Riecken (NY), Ron Rosenblatt (NY), Joseph Trainor (MA), Jeffrey Vallance (CA), Gary Yates (UT). **WALES** Janet & Colin Bord.

Fort Sorters (who classify clippings placed in the Archives for Fortean Research)

Phil Baker, Rachel Carthy, Steve Moore, Mark Pilkington, Bob Rickard, Paul Sieveking, Ian Simmons.

Clipping Credits for FT295

Richard Alexander, Gerard Apps, Helen Bate, Louise Bath, James Beckett, David J Billingham, John F Callahan, Rod Chambers, Brian Chapman, Peter Christie, Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Emily Davies, Kate Eccles, John H Evans, Keith George, Alan Gibb, Anne Hardwick, Hugh Henry, Kevin Hubbard, Eric Jackson, Chris Josiffe, Rosalind Johnson, Giselle Ladouceur, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Steve Moore, Andy Munro, John Palazzi, Jim Price, Jim Riecken, Tom Ruffles, Meryl Santis, Steve Scanlon, Julia Sexton, Amelia Shay, Tony Smith, Alan Stracy, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Joe Trainor, James A Tucker, Jebadiah Valentine, Jeffrey Vallance, Nicholas Warren, Owen Whiteoak, Rosemary Williams, Bobby Zodiac.

PHENOMENOMIX

KENNETH
ANGER 3

HUNT EMERSON & KEVIN JACKSON

AFTER FALLING OUT WITH JIMMY PAGE, ANGER FOUND ANOTHER COMPOSER FOR "LUCIFER RISING" - HIS FORMER HOUSEMATE BOBBY BEAUSOLEIL, WHO HAPPENED TO BE IN A CALIFORNIA PRISON SERVING LIFE FOR MURDER!



ANGER MOVED BACK TO THE USA AND VISITED BOBBY IN JAIL. HE WAS PLEASED WITH THE COMPOSER'S EFFORTS...

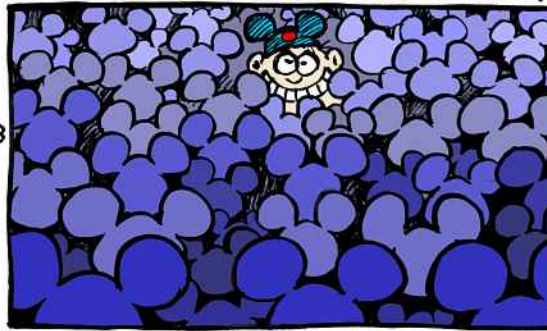
THE CHILLING FACT IS THAT BEAUSOLEIL HAD BEEN AN ASSOCIATE OF MAD, MURDEROUS CULT LEADER CHARLES MANSON!



"LUCIFER RISING" HAD ITS NEW YORK PREMIER IN 1980. ANGER HAD A CAMEO ROLE IN HIS OWN FILM, LOOKING LIKE MICKEY MOUSE IN "FANTASIA..."



THIS MAY HAVE BEEN DELIBERATE... AT THE TIME, ANGER WAS PLANNING TO MAKE A FILM ABOUT A FRIEND WHO HAD THE WORLD'S BIGGEST COLLECTION OF MICKEY MOUSE FIGURES!



...AND ANGER HATED DISNEY...

HE MADE MICKEY INTO A CISSY, WHICH WAS UNFORGIVEABLE! WHEN I MEET WALT DISNEY IN HELL, I'LL KICK HIM IN THE BALLS!



KENNETH ANGER WAS NOW WORLD FAMOUS, BUT HE WASN'T RICH! TO BOOST HIS INCOME HE TOOK A JOB COLLECTING BLUE MOVIES FOR THE KINSEY INSTITUTE...

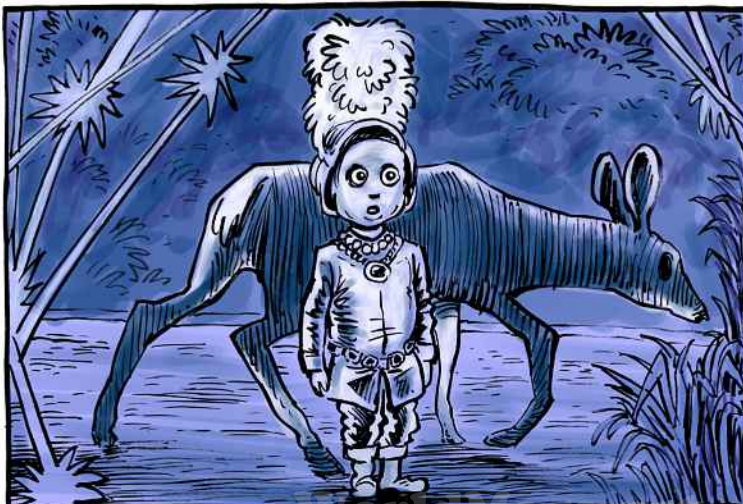


BUT HE WAS ALSO IN DANGER OF BECOMING RESPECTABLE! HIS "MAGICK LANTERN CYCLE" OF FILMS WAS RELEASED ON VIDEO, TO RAVE REVIEWS!

HE TOURED EUROPE AND AMERICA LECTURING ABOUT HIMSELF...

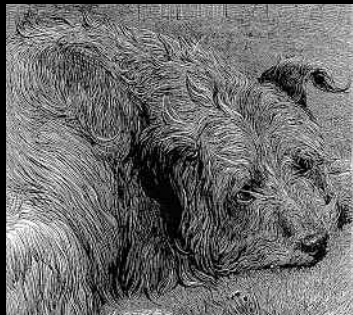


BBC'S ARENA PROGRAMME MADE A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT HIM. IT INCLUDED A SEQUENCE FROM THE HOLLYWOOD MOVIE OF "A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM", IN WHICH THE 4-YEAR OLD KEN PLAYED THE CHANGELING PRINCE...



TODAY, KENNETH ANGER IS STILL ALIVE AND - AT 86! - MAKING SHORT FILMS! KEVIN JACKSON HAS MET HIM SEVERAL TIMES... ANGER ONCE GAVE HIM A BIOGRAPHY OF JACK PARSONS... BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STORY - SEE FT 289, 290 & 291...

COMING NEXT MONTH



GREYFRIARS BOBBY THE TRUTH BEHIND THE MYTH OF VICTORIAN CANINE LOYALTY



50 SHADES OF GREY THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL SEX



FANTHORPE FICTION, CONAN'S CREATOR, SIGNS IN THE SKY AND MUCH MORE...

FORTEAN TIMES 296

ON SALE 6 DECEMBER



HUGO PIETTE

TALES FROM THE VAULT

EACH MONTH WE SEND *FORTEAN TIMES* FOUNDER BOB RICKARD DOWN INTO THE DARKEST, COBWEB-RIDDEN DEPTHS OF THE VAULTS OF FORTEAN TOWERS IN SEARCH OF STORIES FROM *FT*'S PAST.

DECEMBER 1982

One of the most interesting cases of stone-throwing poltergeists began a few days before Christmas. A Kenyan family were terrorised by showers of stones that "seemed to materialise from thin air". Peter Kavoi, a truck driver, who lived just outside the town of Machakos with his son's family and his 100-year-old mother, said they began on the evening of the 23rd as they ate supper. He went outside, thinking to catch neighbourhood children playing a prank, but saw nothing. "While I stood there more stones started raining down on the roof and on the ground near where I was standing."

The pelting resumed the next morning, and in the daylight terrified neighbours told of seeing the stones fall. They ranged from small pebbles up to "half-brick" sized lumps. Some fell straight down; others had angled trajectories from different directions; and still others "would come whizzing along horizontally almost at ground level". Peter, who observed missiles "seemingly materialise [...] out of a tree or over a roof", said some would fall gently and others with such force "they shattered". They even appeared inside his home.

It is the number of witnesses that makes this incident remarkable. As the phenomenon continued daily, Peter called tribal officials and many stayed investigating for more than a month without finding any cause. William Ndunda, the sub-chief, said: "As far as the government is concerned [...] it's a complete mystery." **FT44:36-37**

DECEMBER 1992

Several days before Christmas, the Philippine city of Lucena, about 150km (93 miles) south-east of Manila, was in uproar when a trail of human footprints appeared overnight along several streets. They were of various sizes and impressed about half an inch (13mm) deep into the concrete and asphalt. Around our way, it's usually cats that get "first imprinting" rights to concrete left drying overnight; but it's not said in the Lucena report whether this was *fresh* concrete and asphalt. The ensuing chaos and traffic jams caused crowds who gathered to gawp while Catholics placed lighted candles by the mysterious footprints in the belief they might be of divine origin. **FT68:9**

An unnamed Japanese village, north-west of Tokyo, was raided, we are told, by a pack of wild monkeys

"desperate for food". However, this seems to be a bit of supposition as we also learn that they made off with all the underwear, male as well as female, that they could find on washing lines. We are not aware of any subsequent sightings of well-dressed simians. **FT68:13**

DECEMBER 2002

One of this month's highlights was the news conference held a few days after Christmas in Hollywood, headed by Claude Vorilhon (aka extraterrestrial contactee Raël) and Dr Brigitte Boisselier, head of Clonaid. They announced the successful birth of a human clone – a girl called Eve – as "a step towards human immortality". They said five other mothers would give birth to cloned babies in the following months. The scientific community reacted with widespread scepticism, and health officials pondered the ethical and legal consequences of prohibited human cloning. Boisselier is a 'bishop' in the Raëlian cult; however the Raëlians have consistently denied funding Clonaid, a separate legal entity, emphasising that they give it only their "moral support". As far as I know, Clonaid has given no further proof that Eve, or any other cloned human baby, exists beyond a Clonaid.com statement in May 2004 (the site does not seem to have been updated since), that their techniques are successful and that they now have 23 pregnancies underway and 13 live cloned children. **FT168:6**

We often forget that many countries still have indigenous populations – fiercely proud descendants of 'original' inhabitants who tend to be overlooked by the overwhelmingly dominant culture of the newcomers. This was brought home to modern citizens of the Philippines this month when a huge statue of the deposed dictator Ferdinand Marcos had its face blasted off. The bust, made of concrete over a 99ft (30m) -high frame, stared out from a mountainside in the northern province of Benquet, 125 miles (200km) north of Manila. At first it was thought that it had been dynamited by treasure hunters seeking the huge amounts of gold bullion left behind after the Japanese invasion in World War II, which was rumoured to have been found and hidden away by Marcos. However, the communist New People's Army later claimed this iconic decapitation. They declared the bust "a blight upon land that is the ancestral home of the Ibaloi people". **FT169:21**

Join all these forums
and more with one click!



Head on over to **CULT-LABS.COM**
- where your taste in film is good!

WorldMags.net

SUPERNATURAL

THE COMPLETE 7 SEVENTH SEASON

£30
DVD

£38
BLU-RAY™



**OUT NOW ON
BLU-RAY™ & DVD**

hmv
hmv.com

WorldMags.net

Titles and prices subject to availability while stocks last. Prices may vary online.



© 2012 Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved.